

The power of interests in early-modern English political thought.

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The power of interests in early-modern English political thought

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Abstract

This thesis studies the relationship between the particular interests of individuals and the common good, as it is conceived by various moral and political philosophers in early-modern England (c.1640-c.1740). Interests are spoken of in English translations of Italian and French texts in the early seventeenth century, and are often used to describe goods or desires that are morally ambiguous. The vocabulary becomes commonly used in political tracts during the English Civil Wars, and this is where the thesis begins. We then move on to an analysis of the place of interests in Hobbes's changing civil science. Hobbes continues to see interests as being morally ambiguous and dangerous to the common good. The third chapter deals with the republican tradition (epitomized by James Harrington), in which thinkers begin to conceive how interests might be manipulated to serve the common good. Chapter 4 deals with the men of latitude of the Restoration, who first conceive that interests are in fact identical with our moral virtues. We thereby come to see that the important questions regarding interests in the restoration revolved around religion and morality, rather than (as is commonly assumed) around trade. The fifth chapter deals with the commonwealth theorists, who became increasingly concerned that Charles II's court, and subsequently the court whigs, were beginning to constitute an interest separate from that of the people. We then come to a discussion of Bernard Mandeville, who is generally thought to be a critic of the commonwealthmen, but (in his use of the vocabulary of interests) actually bears quite a close intellectual resemblance to them. The thesis ends with an account of a number of reactions to Mandeville, chief among them, Joseph Butler, who argues that not only are our interests identical with virtue, but they also naturally serve the common good.

Contents

Title Page	1
Abstract	2
Contents	3
Conventions	4
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	8
Chapter 1 – Interests and ties of obligation in the English Civil Wars	32
Chapter 2 – The changing role of interests in Hobbes’s civil science	67
Chapter 3 – English Republicanism and the manipulation of interests	101
Chapter 4 – The Restoration and the moralization of interests	137
Chapter 5 – Commonwealth thought, opposition and interests in the Restoration and beyond	183
Chapter 6 – Bernard Mandeville and the de-moralization of interests	227
Chapter 7 – Joseph Butler, private interests, virtue and the common good	262
Conclusion	292
Bibliography	295

Conventions

Abbreviations The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

Add. MS	Additional Manuscript
BL	British Library
Eg. MS	Egerton Manuscript
Harl. MS	Harley Manuscript

Attributions Where works are published anonymously, I have taken the attributions provided by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edition, unless otherwise stated. Authors' names are given in square brackets.

Bibliographies The bibliographies included are simply an aggregation of the primary sources I have quoted and the secondary scholarship on which I have relied. Unattributed works are listed by title.

Biographical Details All biographical information has been taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edition, unless otherwise indicated.

Dates I take the year to start on 1 January.

Gender I have tried to remain gender neutral as much as possible in my formulations, though have deferred to the sense of the primary material when appropriate.

Transcriptions I have preserved original spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation as far as I could, but have normalised the long 's' and expanded contractions. I have normalised italicisation where it is used uniformly.

Translations All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Where I have made my own translations, however, I have provided the reference of a translation which has been of use to me, and many which I have followed very closely.

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Most of this thesis was researched and written in the Rare Books and Music Room of the British Library. I would like to express my gratitude to its staff for all their hard work in making my time there so productive. I am indebted to the Duke of Devonshire for allowing me access to a number of important documents relating to chapter 2. I have also benefitted from the collections at Cambridge University Library, the Institute of Historical Research, and Senate House Library. Finally, many of the books, pamphlets and periodicals I have consulted were only accessible thanks to the existence of Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) and Early English Books Online (EEBO).

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Introduction

An understanding of politics as it bears on human interests cannot hope to be a unified vision from a single point of view. For one thing it must seek to do justice to the full heterogeneity of human points of view. At a bare minimum it must do its best to allow for the causal significance of their presence (for what can and cannot happen in politics because all of them are there). More adequately, it must also try to register the implications for what the interests of human beings really are of the bewildering variety of human imaginings across cultures, across space, across time and across the lifetime of every individual.¹

I

The comments above come in the course of a work in which the contemporary political theorist, John Dunn, seeks to progress some form of ‘understanding’ about politics. Dunn argues that, whatever degree of engagement with politics we attempt, ‘what there is in the end to understand ... is a very complicated and concrete segment of reality with an urgent bearing on human interests’.² We are then faced with a choice as to whether to ignore the importance of such ‘human interests’ – ‘or by attending to it only as it shows up unmistakably within the causal relations themselves: for example by promoting particular human beings to act in one way rather than other’ – or therefore ‘to understand it [politics] as steadily as we can *through* its relation to those interests’.³ Dunn himself concludes that ‘if we seek to understand politics ... while ignoring its bearing on human interests, it is hard (or perhaps impossible) to know quite how to begin’, and that therefore he has ‘no clear idea of how it would be wise to attempt to understand politics independently of its bearing on human interests’.⁴ He acknowledges that ‘we can be relatively confident that the problem of how to identify human interests will never

¹ Dunn 2000, pp. 101-2.

² Dunn 2000, p. 97.

³ Dunn 2000, p. 97.

⁴ Dunn 2000, pp. 97-9. Dunn does recognize that, in the attempt to come to an understanding of the interests of human beings, many have been left with a ‘rational despondency’, which has driven them to seek an ‘understanding of politics independent of human interests’ (pp. 99-100).

receive a conclusive solution’, but argues that ‘this is no reason whatever for ceasing to try to identify these interests in the arenas which do (or may well) affect our lives’.⁵ We shall have to accept that this leaves us with no ‘unified vision from a single point of view’, and therefore, since ‘human interests patently conflict with one another’, it is crucial that we accept that politics is an arena of conflict between interests.⁶

The consequence of this conclusion for modern democracy is challenging, Dunn argues, since it has ‘pronounced aristocratic elements’.⁷ It will be hard for the majority of people to grasp, but, he insists, ‘any interpretation of democracy as a political value which repudiates the need to understand what is hard to grasp ... will preclude coherent understanding of interests, and make it exceedingly unlikely that the democrats in question do in fact grasp their own interests with any accuracy’.⁸ Thus, for democracies to function, people have to grapple with the complex issue of the content of the interests with which they are dealing. ‘With the growing normative weight and political power of the idea of democracy, this has become harder (and politically more costly) to acknowledge at all frankly’, Dunn argues, and the failure to do so ‘has poisoned modern political thinking almost in its entirety, reducing it more and more radically to professedly morally engaged stupidity or bad faith, or to openly morally unanchored instrumental calculation’.⁹ The implication is, that the endeavour to understand politics is intrinsically related to the endeavour to understand the ‘interests’ of the human beings with whom we engage.

This thesis explores the various ways in which the awareness of particular interests developed over the course of the seventeenth and early-eighteenth century in England. We shall see the points at which various uses came into being. It is not the case that each

⁵ Dunn 2000, p. 101.

⁶ Dunn 2000, pp. 101-2.

⁷ Dunn 2000, p. 105.

⁸ Dunn 2000, p. 105.

⁹ Dunn 2000, pp. 105-6.

new use of the vocabulary displaced any or all of its existing uses. Rather, traditional uses of the vocabulary of interest are employed continually throughout the period. If I do not always draw attention to these continuing deployments of the vocabulary, it is not because I am unaware of them, but because those instances on which I have chosen to focus are of greater significance to my argument.

I begin in the 1640s, not because this is the first time the vocabulary of interests is used in the English language, but because this is the first time that it is used systematically to form an understanding of the workings of politics. We end in the midst of the birth of the Enlightenment, as it is at this point that the concept of interest as an external source of motivation begins to be displaced by the notion of a psychological faculty, counteracting our impulses towards benevolence and virtue. It is the history of the how the vocabulary of interest (not self-interest or self-love) was used by different Anglophone philosophers between these two junctures that I wish to pursue in the following pages.

We witness a dramatic shift in the way in which authors in this period conceive of the relationship between particular interests of individuals, and the common good of the community (however conceived). We begin in the English Civil War, in which writers were primarily concerned to describe politics in terms of interests to emphasize the importance of unity and adherence to the common good. Interests were considered not only morally ambiguous, but as only circumstantially linked to the common good. Various writers in the proceeding century attempt to conceive of ways in which particular interests might be harnessed, or made to serve the common good either through the exercise of virtue, or by means of some form of constitutional mechanism. Finally, Joseph Butler comes to the conclusion that interests are in fact consonant with the common good, but that this requires internal self-government, rather than public virtue, or the operations of virtuous institutions. This development of the vocabulary has not

been recounted until now, though many commentators have already addressed the language and concept of interest. It is important that I first show how my thesis will address the shortcomings of these previous accounts of interests and the common good.

II

In 1977, the economist Albert Hirschman published *The Passions and the Interest*, a work that sought to understand why the ideology of capitalism came to such prominence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In doing so, he consciously challenged Max Weber's argument as it was presented in *The Protestant Ethic*, that the rise of capitalism was driven by a puritan minority. Rather than limiting it to 'some marginal social groups' and 'an insurgent ideology', Hirschman argues that 'the expansion of commerce and industry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' was 'welcomed and promoted ... by a current of opinion that arose right in the centre of the "power structure" and the "establishment" of the time, out of the problems with which the prince and particularly his advisers and other concerned notables were grappling'.¹⁰ The Weberian thesis had been that money-making became an acceptable occupation because it contributed to the salvation of the individual soul. Hirschman's substituted individual salvation for the 'equally desperate search for a way of *avoiding society's ruin*'.¹¹ Thus the motivation is a political one of maintaining stability and predictability.

Political stability is achieved through the countervailing of more vicious passions by more moderate ones, and in particular *avarice*. Hirschman begins his book with a brief account of how the Medieval and Renaissance reliance on glory and honour came to be demolished over the course of the seventeenth century as 'all the heroic virtues were shown to be forms of self-preservation by Hobbes, of self-love by La Rochefoucauld, of

¹⁰ Hirschman 1997, p. 129.

¹¹ Hirschman 1997, p. 130.

vanity and frantic escape from self-knowledge by Pascal'.¹² Alongside this decline in the power of honour and glory comes the development, over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of a 'firm conviction ... that moralizing philosophy and religious precept could no longer be trusted with restraining the destructive passions of men'.¹³ Machiavelli and Bacon led the way in this respect, in their assertion that man has to be understood 'as he is'.¹⁴ The traditional alternative (advocated by Augustine and Calvin) was the 'coercion and repression' of the passions.¹⁵ But instead of repressing the passions (or, indeed, 'harnessing' them) Hirschman points to a new notion that certain passions might be used to 'countervail' or 'counterweigh' the most vicious.¹⁶

In this way, the pre-eminently peaceful and predictable passion of avarice comes to be characterised as 'interest', which is then pitted against the other passions. Again, Machiavelli 'stands at the source of the flow ideas', despite the fact that he 'did not name his child'.¹⁷ Thus, the development of what Hirschman comes to describe as the 'paradigm' of interest takes place in the context of sixteenth century *ragion di stato* theory. But most pronounced is the way in which the vocabulary develops in French *raison d'état*, and in particular that of the Huguenot leader, Henri de Rohan, whose *Interests of the Princes and States of Christendom* first appeared in 1638, and opened with the famous declaration that 'the prince commands the people, and the interest commands the prince'.¹⁸ This constrained the acts of the prince to the dictate of his interest.

Hirschman then fleetingly refers to the way in which the notion of interests became used as a way of articulating domestic politics in the midst of 'revolution and civil war in

¹² Hirschman 1997, pp. 9-11.

¹³ Hirschman 1997, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴ Hirschman 1997, pp. 12-14.

¹⁵ Hirschman 1997, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶ Hirschman 1997, pp. 16-20 (on 'harnessing'), pp. 20-31 (on 'countervailing').

¹⁷ Hirschman 1997, p. 33.

¹⁸ Rohan 1995, p. 161: 'Les princes commandent aux peuples et l'intérêt commande aux princes.' See also Hirschman 1997, pp. 33-6.

mid-seventeenth-century England'.¹⁹ However, the reference is only momentary and – apart from a few further isolated allusions to Hobbes – further discussions of the vocabulary of interests in seventeenth-century England are limited to three footnotes.²⁰ These footnotes demonstrate a reliance on Felix Raab's *The English Face of Machiavelli* (1964) and J. A. W. Gunn's *Politics and the Public Interest in the Seventeenth Century* (1969).²¹

Raab's work was primarily concerned with charting the fate of Machiavellian ideas in the context of sixteenth and seventeenth century England. He argues that the England of the 1640s and 1650s used Machiavelli's works principally 'as comment on the principle of rule by a single person'.²² For Raab, the changes that took place over the course of the civil wars and Commonwealth 'involved a re-evaluation of the institution of monarchy', in which divine right arguments for kingly rule 'became increasingly inadequate once the rupture between king and parliament had become an established fact'.²³ 'Attention was inevitably focused', therefore, 'on an aspect of Machiavelli which had not seemed relevant or important earlier': 'practical realities' rather than 'ethical or theological justification'.²⁴

For Raab, a crucial component of this new practical language was 'interest'. He never claims that Machiavelli initiated this language, but that 'the general context ... was Machiavellian' and that in those writers who deployed the vocabulary, 'a direct consciousness of Machiavelli is usually evident'.²⁵ The ultimate downfall of Raab's analysis is the fact that he jumps from Machiavelli to 1640s England, without paying any attention to French writers such as Rohan, who are so important. He draws our attention

¹⁹ Hirschman 1997, pp. 36-7.

²⁰ Hirschman 1997, pp. 36-7.

²¹ Such reliance does not stop with Hirschman. As recently as 1994, in his work on eighteenth-century conceptions of the common good, Peter Miller includes a section on the impact of Rohan post-1750, citing only Gunn's 1968 article to cover the whole of the seventeenth century (Miller 1994, pp. 117-121).

²² Raab 1964, p. 118.

²³ Raab 1964, pp. 118-19.

²⁴ Raab 1964, p. 119.

²⁵ Raab 1964, p. 158. Raab later admits that there are a number of works that argue from interest, and lists many of them in an extended footnote (pp. 236-7).

to Caluybute Downing's *Discourse upon the Interest of England* (1641), which, as we shall see, was almost entirely indebted to Rohan's analysis of the interests of European rulers in 1638, but who for Raab's purposes is simply mimicking Machiavelli's 'empirical approach to politics'.²⁶ With very little concern for other actors in the civil war, he then moves on to a more lengthy (yet still very selective) analysis of the works of Marchamont Nedham, who was responsible for applying the analysis of interests not only to the monarch, but to all groups in society.²⁷

Gunn's book, published five years later, provides a more comprehensive overview of some of the ways in which the term 'interest' is used in the course of seventeenth-century English discourse. Gunn's *Philosophy and the Public Interest* was published, in part, in order to lend an historical perspective to the growing discourse on the theory of the 'public interest'. From the 1950s, this notion became a focus of much academic attention, particularly in the USA.²⁸ Gunn recognized that any account given of the public interest would have to incorporate an account of the relationship between the public interest (more commonly articulated as the 'common good') and the particular interests of individuals. He selects seventeenth-century England for his subject, because 'at this stage, it is more apt to be questioned and discussed than when it becomes generally accepted'.²⁹

For Gunn, there are essentially two ways of conceiving of the relation between particular interests and the public interest. The first is the traditional approach of monarchs and courtiers, who use the abstract notion of a common good that exists somehow above the people. The second, more modern sense of the public interest, which develops over the course of the seventeenth century, is constituted by the aggregation of the particular interests that make up the political community. Gunn points out that this modern sense of the public interest has become the liberal understanding we

²⁶ Raab 1964, p. 158.

²⁷ Raab 1964, pp. 159-64.

²⁸ See Lippmann 1955, esp. ch. 4. The contemporary debate has been re-examined in Bozeman 2007.

²⁹ Gunn 1969, pp. vii-viii.

have today: ‘The virtue of a public interest conceived in terms of maintaining private rights was that it reduced the lustrous and distant goal of a public good to proportions that were comprehensible to private persons.’³⁰ My most significant contribution to scholarship in this thesis is the demonstration that an alternative conception of the public interest existed, and that it was product of the republican experiment of the 1650s.

Gunn is not careful to distinguish what is so important about this *vocabulary* of interest (which, for all their flaws, both Hirschman and Raab do). Thus, for Gunn, the idea of the public interest simply comes to replace the classical notion of *salus populi, suprema lex esto* (‘the safety of the people is the supreme law’).³¹ To elide these two ideas is fatal, as it neglects the crucial aspect of the rise of the vocabulary. As I go on to demonstrate, the vocabulary of interests came into usage originally as a way of expressing a large degree of moral ambiguity. Therefore, it is very problematic to ascribe it the same meaning as ‘good’ or even words ‘benefit’ or ‘profit’, both of which were in wide use from the medieval period, and which were often connected with the Latin vocabulary of ‘utile’ or ‘utilitas’. Similarly, Richard Tuck has convincingly argued that the growth of the use of ‘interesse’ in late Italian Renaissance texts was deeply associated with a move away from the niceties of Ciceronian humanism, and the rise of a rival ‘Tacitism’ with its lower degree of moral certainty.³²

Finally, Gunn proceeds to suggest that Richard Cumberland was an important exponent of the modern, liberal conception of the public interest as the aggregated interests of private individuals, despite the fact that Cumberland’s *De legibus naturae* (1672) is written in Latin. Gunn argues that, although he never wrote in English, and so never used the word ‘interest’ in his writings, his readers should be thought of as having understood Cumberland’s use of ‘good’ as a reference to interest, due to the way in

³⁰ Gunn 1969, p. 323.

³¹ Gunn 1969, p. 3.

³² Tuck 1993, pp. 38-45.

which *De legibus naturae* was paraphrased by James Tyrrell in 1692.³³ As I shall demonstrate, Tyrrell does deploy the vocabulary of interests in his paraphrase, but he does so in a very limited sense, and not in a way that would suggest Cumberland was intending his English readers to substitute ‘good’ for ‘interest’ in their heads.

The desire to associate interests with goods at the beginning of this period is mirrored at the end of the period by a desire to associate them with the development of the faculty of self-interest or self-love. Pierre Force has attempted to re-interpret the development of capitalistic thought before Adam Smith. However, for a book that purports to address self-interest before Smith, it contains much more than one might expect about Smith himself.³⁴ Force’s primary concern is to present ‘the case that Rousseau is an interlocutor for Smith’,³⁵ and that the philosophical struggle between Epicureans and Stoics forms the backdrop to Smith’s own philosophical development.³⁶

As in Hirschman, only brief mention is made of the importance of the ‘reason of state’ background to the idea of interest. However, Force wants to question the notion that ‘interests’ in this tradition are really pitted against the passions. Rather, he wants to propose that there is a strong tradition, enduring from Montaigne, through Hobbes, to Locke, that private interests equal private passions.³⁷ But Force does not engage in much close-reading or deep textual analysis and neither is he able to break free of the association of the Enlightenment notion of self-love and interest. As I shall show, it is a mistake to insist on too much identity between interest and self-interest or self-love, if we are to reach a coherent analysis of how the vocabulary is used in seventeenth-century England.

³³ Gunn 1969, p. 285.

³⁴ Force 2003.

³⁵ Force 2003, pp. 3-4.

³⁶ Force 2003, pp. 48-90.

³⁷ Force 2003, pp. 141-4.

III

In the last ten years, two studies have appeared that seek to readdress aspects of the history of interests that might explain or discredit the modern assumption which they find in neo-liberalism: the assumption that all human actions and all institutions are defined by self-interest.

Stephen Engelmann, seeking to understand the modern transplantation of economic ideology on to all other parts of life, points to the origin of the theory of ‘monistic interest’. In order ‘to make sense of contemporary politics’, he argues, ‘we must first make sense of neoliberalism’.³⁸ Neoliberalism is defined, for Engelmann’s purposes, as a doctrine in which markets are promoted ‘as the preferred regulatory mechanism of everyday life’.³⁹ His main focus is on the eighteenth-century utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham, but he also has some things to say about reason of state.

He argues that, despite his many errors, ‘Hirschman does succeed ... in estranging us from the usual story’s high-canon account of interest, which combines flawed and often anachronistic interpretations with flawed assumptions about interest rationality’. He claims that the canonical figures of Machiavelli and Hobbes are both grossly misrepresented when associated with the theory of interest, and ‘are probably better seen as writers to whom theorists of an interest-governed world *respond*’.⁴⁰ Engelmann instead wants to propose a radically different background to the triumph of the language of interest in the modern world.

More than any other writer about interests, Engelmann recognizes the ‘theological connection’ in the seventeenth century.⁴¹ In particular, he understands the way in which England initially conceived of itself as an elect nation whose particular interest was as a

³⁸ Engelmann 2003, p. 1.

³⁹ Engelmann 2003, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Engelmann 2003, p. 19.

⁴¹ Engelmann 2003, p. 106.

protector of Protestant religion.⁴² Engelmann is the only previous writer on interests to recognise the importance of men of latitude, such as the bishops John Tillotson and John Wilkins, who will feature in chapter 4 of this study. Engelmann credits the latitudinarians with having first formulated what he describes as ‘theological utilitarianism’, since ‘they succeeded in constructing a scheme of value not tied ... to the circulation of material goods’.⁴³ The ‘latitudinarian conscience’, he argues, ‘understood God’s rules as the foundation for expectations and apprehensions of the future, in order to calculate a route to individual and collective felicity’.⁴⁴ Shaftesbury and Bentham are figured as the inheritors of this latitudinarian innovation: indeed, they are credited with the triumph of the neo-liberal ‘monistic’ interest of the modern world.

What Engelmann’s interpretation lacks is an account of how particular interests might be conceived within this system. Rather, he tracks the development of the notion that the public interest is grounded in the monolith of economic growth. Although this is an interesting road to take, it leaves us with no coherent conception as to how politicians or political theorists should seek to understand the relationship between particular interests and the common good.

Most recently, Dean Mathiowetz has provided a novel and provocative reminder that the original role of the vocabulary of interest was a political one. He self-consciously takes on the task of countering the modern (liberal) assumption that interest always and only refers to a psychological sense of ‘calculating self-regard’. The ‘side’ of interests that Mathiowetz wants to pursue through historical study and theoretical reflection is a ‘juridical’ and ‘legal’ one. His aim is to stress the importance of recognising that the

⁴² Engelmann 2003, pp. 104-40.

⁴³ Engelmann 2003, p. 139.

⁴⁴ Engelmann 2003, p. 141.

concerns and interests of political actors are as much determined by political institutions as politics is determined by interests.⁴⁵

The strength of Mathiowetz's approach is that it provides us with a much-needed rejoinder to the neo-liberal assumption that our interest (or self-interest) is some kind of internal psychological disposition (or pre-disposition). This conception is the one that dominates modern understanding, and Mathiowetz gives a detailed analysis of how it has come to dislodge the older juridical meaning. He introduces his theme with reference to a contemporary political conundrum: why do working-class voters in Kansas continually vote for Republican candidates in elections when their economic *interest* is best served by voting for Democratic candidates? The answer is clear: because 'appeals to interest are sites of identity formation, rather than simply products of calculating self-regard'.⁴⁶ In other words, contemporary political theorists must recognise that interests are not natural factors that permanently colour our political actions, but are often products of our political circumstances that we can appeal to or contest as it serves our political purposes.

Mathiowetz characterizes his argument as promoting a 'juridical' and 'legal' notion of interest against those scholars who 'have emphasised the influence of Machiavellian humanism in early modern England'.⁴⁷ But his claim seems to be based exclusively on a reading of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, where he finds a psychology that is selfish at heart and advocates that the prince follows his own interests at the expense of others. There is no reference to Machiavelli's later discussion in his *Discourses*.

A reading of the *Discourses* might have revised Mathiowetz's entire case, since he argues that his conception of interest is one that is 'contested' and 'agonistic'. Machiavelli's portrayal of the Roman constitution in the *Discourses* is one in which the

⁴⁵ Mathiowetz 2011.

⁴⁶ Mathiowetz 2011, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Mathiowetz 2011, p. 66.

competing *umori* that make up the commonwealth are constantly in tension. This tension is based on a complex set of judgments being made about what it is to be part of that section of society. The two *umori* to be reckoned with are that of the people on the one hand and the nobility on the other. Machiavelli does not use the vocabulary of ‘interests’ or ‘interesse’, despite the fact that it was clearly available to him, and was used by at least one of his contemporaries, Francesco Guicciardini. But this did not stop his heirs in Civil War England from adopting the vocabulary to characterise the very constitutional structure suggested in Machiavelli’s work. In particular, the struggle between the rulers (who aim for arbitrary power) on the one hand, and the people (who simply want to maintain their liberty against such arbitrary power) on the other, is clearly characterised by civil war theorists as a struggle (or a *contestation*, an *antagonism*) between interests.

Hobbes is clearly an important figure in the history of ‘interests’. While he is aware of the vocabulary in his first Anglophone work of political theory, *The Elements of Law* (1640), it is not until his *Leviathan* (1651) that interests take on a central role in his political theory. Thus, the most interesting conclusions will come from studying and comparing parallel passages from the two works, and thereby coming to an understanding of what the vocabulary is *doing* for Hobbes in the later work, which was absent in the former work. But this is a strategy neither Mathiowetz nor Engelmann has seemingly any inclination to follow, choosing to focus instead on the relatively tedious question of whether or not Hobbes was an ‘interest theorist’ in the modern sense. This is indicative of a neglect of his engagement with reason of state, which I intend to show is intimately related to Hobbes’s new use of ‘interest’ in *Leviathan*.

We can conclude that, although Mathiowetz is right to remind us that the original use of interest is political, he is not convincing in his claim that the reason of state tradition is irrelevant to its development. The account that I give in this thesis seeks to

rectify this mistake. At the same time, I want to show that previous histories that have taken this route have other weaknesses, which I next need to consider.

IV

A small number of commentators, including Mathiowetz, have pointed to the juridical origins of ‘interest’ in Roman Law, and in particular, in those issues surrounding ‘*id quod interest*’.⁴⁸ This is an aspect of the history of the vocabulary still largely neglected. The most extensive analysis comes in Mathiowetz’s study of the ‘juridical’ side of interests, but the problem remains that he does not provide a proper account, relying on a very limited selection of medieval scholastic sources, and providing no evidence at all of the how the vocabulary is actually *used* in the context of Roman Law. Since it falls outside of the Anglophone context of this thesis, and – to my knowledge – was never addressed in any translations of the period, I have been unable to include any further analysis in this study. Instead, I have focused on the uses of the vocabulary I have found in humanist translations of the period.

Mathiowetz focuses exclusively on the ancient tradition of talking about interests, while neglecting its development in the *studia humanitatis* of the Renaissance. In two Latin grammar textbooks from 1508-9, we find interest defined (along lines provided by John Stanbridge in the previous century)⁴⁹ as an impersonal verb, which can be used along with ‘*mea*’, ‘*tua*’ or ‘*sua*’ to signify profit or advantage, most generally in material terms.⁵⁰ At around the same time, the term is used on the statute books of Henry VII to indicate a legal claim to a title or to property.⁵¹ Throughout the sixteenth century, the English

⁴⁸ Heilbron 1998, p. 179; Mathiowetz 2011, pp. 40-6; Swedberg 2005, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Stanbridge 1482, p. 1^r.

⁵⁰ Holte 1508, pp. 43^v-44^r; *Longe parvula* 1509, p. 5^v.

⁵¹ *Statuta bonum publicum concernencia edita in parlamento tento apud westmonesterium xiiii die Octobris Anno regni Illustrissimi Domini nostri Regis Henrici septimi* 1500, pp. 17^v-18^r.

term is most prominently employed in this way, alongside ‘rights’ and ‘claims’ people have in property, but (more importantly) in office and in title.

But what needs explanation is the movement from this to a perhaps more sophisticated and pertinent conception of interest, which is epitomised by John Florio in his Italian-English dictionary of 1598, in which he defines ‘interesse’ (frequently translated into English as ‘interest’ at the time) as not merely ‘the interest or profite of money for lone’, but also as ‘that which toucheth or concerneth a mans state or reputation’.⁵² These two ideas of ‘state’ and ‘reputation’ show Florio’s thinking about this issue to be immersed in reading of both the early sixteenth-century humanism of figures such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini and the reason of state literature to which they gave birth.

Machiavelli is clearly very important in this story, but not in a direct sense: as we have already established, he never uses the vocabulary in Italian, and is not translated into English until the 1630s. Thus, in this time period, Guicciardini comes to be of crucial importance.⁵³ Tuck observes that ‘it was Guicciardini who provided some of the key terms for a new kind of politics, such as “interest”’. The term “interest” seldom occurs in Machiavelli, but it is a crucial word in Guicciardini ... and it was to be the watchword of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries’.⁵⁴ Thus, Guicciardini is the first to use the vocabulary in a meaningful sense, and this is reflected in his *Storia d’Italia*, completed in 1540, and translated into English in 1579 by the English humanist, Geffray Fenton. It is in the *Historie*, that Guicciardini argues: ‘With moste men the mocions of proper and private interest may do more, then the respect of publike and generall profite.’⁵⁵

Fenton’s *Historie* went through three editions before 1620, and was influential on a number of subsequent English humanists, in particular Robert Dallington, who lifted a

⁵² Florio 1598, p. 187.

⁵³ McKenzie 1981, p. 278.

⁵⁴ Tuck 1993, pp. 38-9.

⁵⁵ Guicciardini 1579, p. 764. Cf. Guicciardini 1994, pp. 114-15; Guicciardini 1998, vol. 3, p. 1493.

number of parts of the earlier work to support his *Aphorismes Civill and Militarie* (1613). In typical humanist style, Dallington deploys Guicciardini alongside other historians such as Thucydides, Tacitus, Polybius and Machiavelli. Perhaps the most important of Dallington's aphorisms for our purposes reads:

Though the generall good of the Colleagues, make the frame of all Confederations: yet particular interest, is the foundation whereupon they are built: and as this continueth sound or weake, in any one of the complices, so standeth or falleth that great building. For one State combines with another, in one and the same action, and concures to one and the same generall end, no longer then it is for it owne proper good. The Practice runnes often thus: the Rule stands otherwise.⁵⁶

This quotation synthesizes a number of different humanist accounts in presenting the reality of human interaction as an arena of interests: 'particular interest is the foundation' and dictates the rise and fall of the general good, though the ideal reality may 'stand otherwise'. Dallington thus reiterates the morally ambiguous nature of particular interests, and their ripeness for use in political analyses.

There is a noticeable increase in the number of occurrences of 'interest' in translations during this period. To cite just one example, two translations of Seneca's *De beneficiis*, published roughly 50 years apart, display very different attitudes towards the translation of 'interest'. In particular, I shall focus on the translations of Arthur Golding (1578) and Thomas Lodge (1614). A crucial difference to be identified is the added importance given in Lodge's translation to the vocabulary of interest, which in Arthur Golding's translation of 1578 is used only to denote the practice of usury.⁵⁷

The major consequence for political thought of the period was that it had a new way to talk about men's increasingly complex interactions with one another, and with the state, without necessarily ascribing such actions moral status. Predominantly, the

⁵⁶ Dallington 1613, p. 33.

⁵⁷ E.g. Seneca 1614, p. 13: '*Hercules* atchieved no conquest for his owne particular interest, he traversed the world, not desiring possessions, but revenging injuries.' This reference to interest is absent from the same passage in Seneca 1578, sig. C, iv. For the original Latin, see Seneca 1935, vol. 3, pp. 40-3.

particular interests of individuals are subordinated to the common good. For example, in his manuscript treatise, *Monarchie of Man*, John Eliot argues that kings ought to be motivated by the 'wellfare of their subjects, not their private interests, or faculties, but ye publicke utilitie and good'.⁵⁸ More often than not, the aim was to persuade rulers that their charge was to serve the common good, rather than their own interests.

However, in the 1630s in France, there developed the notion that the interest of the prince could in fact be called upon to regulate his treatment of his subjects. The most prominent exponent of this position for my purposes in this thesis is Henri, Duc de Rohan, whose *Interests of the Princes and States of Christendom* appeared in 1638 and was translated into English on the eve of the calling of the Long Parliament in 1640 by Henry Hunt. It is at this juncture that I begin, offering an account of the way in which Rohan's arguments took hold of the English political imagination: his use of interest gave certain English pamphleteers a new way of expressing certain old ideas. In particular, they take up Rohan's claim that the particular interest of England was as a defender of Protestantism in Europe.

My first chapter goes on to deal with the various uses of the vocabulary of interests during the English civil wars, which is when the term first comes to be widely employed. It is used early on in the civil war to question the idea that political power is binding on the conscience, in favour of the claim that we obey from a sense of our interests. The idea is then picked up by the debaters at Putney in their discussions of who should be incorporated into the franchise. It then seems that the Leveller Richard Overton offers an early formulation of the (modern liberal) idea that individuals are the best judge of what is in their own interest, and it seems that he is the first to write explicitly in this fashion. I end the chapter with a close analysis of the early texts of Marchamont Nedham. I focus on his parliamentary newsbook, *Mercurius Britannicus*, on his pamphlet

⁵⁸ BL Harl. MS 2228, p. 18. See also Eliot 1879, vol. 2, p. 31.

published on the occasion of his defection to the king's side in 1647, *The Case of the Kingdom Stated*, and finally on the newsbook which followed, *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (1647-9). Nedham develops the theory that the interest of the king lies in holding arbitrary power over his subjects, while the people's interest is essentially in liberty from such arbitrary power. This conception of politics was to become very important in republican thought in the 1650s, which is the subject of chapter 3.

The second chapter examines the vocabulary of interests in the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, which is shown to develop between *The Elements of Law* (1640) and *Leviathan* (1651). Although Hobbes knows of the vocabulary in 1640, he does not use it, whereas in *Leviathan* it is assigned a prominent place. Through an analysis of parallel passages from the two texts, I show what the vocabulary is *doing* for Hobbes, and thereby what the concept means for him in the context of his philosophy as a whole. Ultimately, Hobbes uses the vocabulary in a way that suggests that interests can in no way be a basis for government, as they are far too unpredictable and liable to promote faction. Furthermore, the only conceivable 'public interest' that could be supported is the interest of the fictional person of the state.

I conclude chapter 2 by showing how Hobbes's theory opens up the possibility of conceiving of an interest which is specifically *public*. It is in the *Charge of the Commons* against Charles in 1649 that the vocabulary of the 'public interest' is first used. Charles is accused of neglecting the public interest in favour of his own private interests. In the decade that followed, republican theorists struggle to give definition to this concept. Many (I mainly focus on John Streater and the later works of Nedham) simply collapse the idea of the public interest into the interest of the people (in remaining free from arbitrary power). However, the main focus of the chapter is James Harrington, in whose *Oceana* (1656), this idea is challenged. Harrington argues instead that the public interest is liberty *itself*, and that this is bound up in both people and aristocracy. I show how, for

Harrington, it is only this formulation of the public interest as liberty that secures the state from the threat posed by factionalism (and here Harrington joins with Hobbes in arguing that factions are promoted by private interests). Although Harrington's views about particular interests and the public interest have been widely discussed, this element in his argument has never, so far as I am aware been discussed. It appears to be the general aim of republican theorists in the 1650s (and of Harringtonians in the 1660s and 1670s) to show that individual interests have to be somehow institutionally manipulated in order to conform to the common good.

Following the Restoration, the question turned to how particular interests could be reconciled with the common good, and this constitutes my third main theme. During the years between the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution, it became no longer enough simply to show that interest could conform to the common good. It also had to be shown that interest was in harmony with men's *duty*. As I show in chapter 4, it was writers within the Anglican establishment who first argued that what is in our interests is necessarily linked to what it is our duty to perform.

I begin by demonstrating, in contradiction to many commentators, that the important arena of interest is *religion*, not *trade*.⁵⁹ It is true that a number of pamphleteers in this period stress that England's national interest is in the increase of trade.⁶⁰ But I want instead to emphasize two specific points about the role of interests in religious and political discourse. First I look at the way in which advocates of toleration deployed the vocabulary as a method by which to persuade the establishment that dissenters were not a danger to political stability. I then move on to show how the vocabulary of interest became *moralized*. In saying this, I mean that certain writers began to claim that our interests are identical with moral action. Since neither the hard-line puritan, nor ultra-

⁵⁹ E.g. Pincus 1998, pp. 705-36.

⁶⁰ E.g. C[arter] 1671; *England's Interest in Securing the Woollen-Manufacture, of this Realm* 1689; Parker 1648, sig. A, 2^r.

high church positions were able to countenance such a claim, it fell to the moderate Anglicans – also known as latitudinarians – to make the move into such a moralized discourse, and chief among them was John Tillotson, who became Archbishop in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9.

Chapter 5 takes up the republican theme initiated by Harrington. I show that republican writers after the Restoration were united in a number of ways through their use of the vocabulary of interest. Beginning with the earl of Shaftesbury's *Letter from a Person of Quality* (1675), I show that the republican (or 'country') movement, in opposition to the political establishment, perceived a constant danger that the Stuart monarchy would form itself into an interest separate from, and therefore dangerous to, the body of the people. I go on to consider members of the same tradition following the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent formulation of the canon of whig texts that was produced in the following decade. As I have already suggested, these republican writers continue the conception of the public interest initiated by Harrington in the 1650s.

My sixth chapter deals with the writings of Bernard Mandeville, as well as pointing to different contexts in which his work needs to be read, if his references to interests are to be properly understood. His writing has been portrayed by many commentators as attacking the ideology of civic republicanism. They argue that Mandeville's focus on the role of vice in supporting national economies is designed as a direct rebuttal to the republicans' various conceptions of public virtue. I do not disagree that Mandeville's disregard and scorn for public virtue and his hostility towards the economic principles of the country party evidence an anti-republican stance. However, I do not believe that this was Mandeville's primary target. In his discussion of interests, I want to show, Mandeville was taking head-on the notion that individuals could serve the common good and their own interests at the same time, while not incurring the guilt of vice. In response

to the optimism of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, Mandeville seeks to thoroughly *demoralize* interests.

In my final chapter, I address a number of writers who offer criticisms of Mandeville's philosophy. Some, chief among them George Berkeley, seek to tackle what they perceived to be Mandeville's pernicious disavowal of moral virtue and his acceptance or embrace of vice. They emphasise the place of God as the source of moral goodness, and in doing so dismiss entirely any confidence philosophers may have in human interests as the basis of society or politics. Thus, in a profound way, they can be classed alongside Mandeville in their demoralization of interests.

Other writers challenging Mandeville – I primarily focus on Francis Hutcheson – do so by presenting a defence of the notion that men are, by nature, benevolent. Following the 'moral sense' theory of Shaftesbury, they argue that human beings have a natural propensity to aid others, and to promote others' interests. While these writers employ the vocabulary of interest to develop their theories, their focus is upon men's natural *desire*, rather than *interest* to benefit others. The conclusion continues to be that men are to be expected to substitute the common good of the whole for their own interest where the two are in conflict. In order to move past these ideas, it is important that we take Mandeville on his own terms.

I therefore move on to the analysis of a number of writers who do this. Among these, the most important in terms of his use of 'interest' is the moderate Anglican bishop Joseph Butler. In his *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (1726), Butler argues that what is in our interests, is not only also in our duty, but serves the common good at the same time.

There are references to Butler in previous studies of the history of theories of private interest and the common good.⁶¹ Hirschman is limited in his treatment of Butler, as he

⁶¹ Force 2003, pp. 81-2, 192-3, 200-1; Hirschman 1997, pp. 35, 46-7; Myers 1983, pp. 57-60.

assumes that interest comes to refer purely to avarice, and *not* to fame, reputation, or indeed to human happiness as a whole. Butler deems interest to be identified with ‘one’s own happiness’ in a very direct manner, and that both are thus to be maintained as ‘a manifest Obligation’.⁶² Thus, Hirschman’s assumption ignores any method by which figures such as Butler attempted to justify all such forms of interests (properly understood) as vested in virtue and concern for the common good. Like Hirschman, however, I seek to question Max Weber’s notion of the interest theory as the invention of ‘marginal social groups’ of dissenting radicals. Rather, as we see with Butler and others, the argument was being made to a much broader audience, albeit with very different motives.⁶³

One recent commentator argues that ‘the doctrine which Butler synthesized from his critiques of Hobbes and Shaftesbury was that our healthy, vigorous and unashamed self-interest must combine with a consistent devotion to the duty of loving our neighbours and engaging our interest with theirs’.⁶⁴ He goes on to argue that, for Butler, ‘introvert self-love cannot protect the individual, let alone build society, without extrovert benevolence’.⁶⁵ I shall argue that Butler’s social theory goes much further than arguing that benevolence has to accompany actions motivated by interest: he in fact argues that serving the common good is identical with our interest. A study of Butler’s moral and social thought provides us with two things: a reminder of the argument that interests and morality are identical, and a reassurance that we *can* have a conception of society that is at once moral and serves our interests.

⁶² Butler 1749, pp. xvii-xviii.

⁶³ Hirschman 1997, p. 129.

⁶⁴ Tennant 2011, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Tennant 2011, p. 218.

Throughout this thesis, I draw attention to a number of different uses of the term ‘interest’. These uses of the vocabulary often took place across a number of different genres – political pamphlets, political theoretical treatises, works of moral theory, sermons, spiritual writing – and therefore it would be wrong to assume that they have a unified audience. I have taken all of these writings to be using the vocabulary of interest – or not using it in some cases – in order to answer the question of how people behave (or how they *should* behave). In this sense, there is no limit to the kind of interest or interests that these writers talk about.

As my focus is on the way in which people used the vocabulary, I do not come out of the discussion with any concrete concepts. However, there is one much-studied concept which I have tried to avoid. When many historians, philosophers, and other commentators write about interests, they are often engaged in the debate as to whether human beings are by nature egoistic or altruistic, whether we naturally serve ourselves or others. Throughout most of this thesis I have sought to eschew this question, not because it is invalid, but because I want to distance the discussions of ‘interests’ from such debates, since interested behaviour (as it is described by the writers and thinkers under discussion) does not necessarily align with selfish behaviour. Furthermore, my concern is to understand interests as objects or objectives, rather than an interest as a psychological attribute or disposition.

I make this point particularly strongly in the case of Hobbes and Mandeville, both of whom are serious philosophers often dismissed by contemporaries (ours as well as their own) as offering a conception of human egoism so simplistic as to be absurd. In both cases, I have argued that, if we were to make the argument for such an egoism, we

cannot take their treatments of interest(s) as a starting point, since this would be to ignore the way in which they *use* the vocabulary in their texts.⁶⁶

However, in my two final chapters I am forced to confront the issue of human nature as altruistic or egoistic. This is in large part because this is simply where the sources take us. In particular, thinkers such as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson seek to combat what they perceive to be attacks upon morality, which in turn is focused on benevolence. This move also reflects the development, not of the moralization of interests which I pursue in chapter 4, but the development of the rival notion of self-interest. The development of this concept, over the course of the Enlightenment, sadly comes at the expense of the notion of interest that I analyse here, and this shift in emphasis provides an apt moment at which to bring my argument to a close.

By way of conclusion, I make some comments on the normative impact of the foregoing chapters. We end with Butler's critique of the manipulation of particular interests, and his insistence that (when properly understood) our private interests are in fact identical with the common good. This argument, and the subsequent utilitarianism of figures such as Jeremy Bentham, have obscured the recognition (of figures from Hobbes to Mandeville) that some form of harnessing, ingenuity or manipulation is necessary in order for modern human beings to serve the common good. If nothing else, I hope that this thesis has re-asserted the significance of this alternative in the history of political thought.

⁶⁶ See chapters 2 and 6 below.

Interests and ties of obligation in the English Civil Wars

I

In March 1642, the mounting dispute between Charles I and Parliament came to a climax as the Commons and Lords came together to pass the *Militia Ordinance*. When they passed it in the absence of the king, they expressed in no uncertain terms their claim to rule legitimately without the assent of the monarch.¹ This came in the face of Charles's threat to use his negative voice (veto) for the first time against Parliamentary legislation. It was the historical moment at which Charles himself located the point when the issue of sovereignty was called fatally into question, precipitating the descent into nearly ten years of civil war.²

The key problem was to establish whether the king or Parliament was the legitimate holder of supreme power in England. Even the vast majority of those who argued for a mixed constitution would claim that one or the other had the determining vote. With this problem came the question of what constituted legitimate authority. It is not so simple as to say that royalists argued from a divine right perspective and parliamentarians argued from consent. There were a number of puritans who opposed Charles's policies but felt constrained by the biblical injunction against resisting established rulers.³ And increasingly there were certain colours of royalist who would argue for a human (rather than divine) basis for monarchical rule.

The role of the vocabulary of interests in the period of the English Civil Wars is not monopolised by either side of the conflict. Both royalists and parliamentarians used the idea in different ways to justify their claims. The role of this chapter is to chart these arguments. What seems most clear is that there is no single narrative of interests in the

¹ Kenyon 1986, pp. 219-20.

² Kenyon 1986, p. 294.

³ See Coffey 1998, p. 974.

1640s. To begin with, it was picked up from the work of Henri de Rohan (translated into English in the same year as the calling of the Long Parliament). The first section of this chapter will show that early deployments of the vocabulary were almost entirely dependent on Rohan's use. I shall then show how the language changed in the midst of the debates over the mixed constitution, in particular between Henry Fernee and Charles Herle in 1642-4. I show how Herle used the idea to develop a new method of justifying the political supremacy of parliament against royalist claims.

We shall then encounter the challenge posed by the Leveller critics in the period 1645-9. At this stage, particularly through the writings of Richard Overton, there emerged the notion that individuals were the best judges of their own interests. This was a vital implication of the Levellers' undermining of the earlier parliamentary claim that *only* Parliament knew best how to govern England. I end the chapter with an analysis of the early writings of Marchamont Nedham. Nedham's adoption and adaptation of the vocabulary of interest is crucial in setting the stage for at least the next decade of political debate.

II

Although they present no united and definitive definition of interests, those who use the term in this period are all demonstrably influenced by two figures: Niccolò Machiavelli and Henri de Rohan. The vast majority of writers discussed in this chapter were wary of showing their allegiance to Machiavelli. As has already been shown however, Machiavelli had provided a theory of mixed government which was already highly influential. Rohan was much more easily assimilated into English political discourse, and there is an extent

to which, to follow the fate of the writings of Henri de Rohan (especially in the early stages of civil conflict in England) is to chart the progress of the vocabulary of interests.⁴

Rohan's *Treatise of the Interest of the Princes and States of Christendome* was first published in France in 1638, and was quickly translated into English by Henry Hunt. The English edition first appeared in 1640, and was quickly followed by a pocket-size version in 1641.⁵ The text is famous for the dictum that 'the prince commands the people, and the interest commands the prince.' He goes on to argue that this is not necessarily to say that the prince is always right, but that if the prince is right about what 'the interest' is, all will be better off. 'The interest', he claims 'can never fail'.⁶ The first part of his *Treatise of the Interest of the Princes and States of Christendom* of 1638 is dedicated to an analysis of the current interests of the various powers in Europe of the time. The second part is then dedicated to the study of what Rohan describes as the 'ill success' of various national policies in the half century before. He attributes this failure to a deficiency of understanding of what is really in the interests of states, and re-enforces the previous notion that 'the interest on its own can never fail', stating that 'our proper interest, guided by our reason, should be the ruler of our actions'.⁷

⁴ I quote here from *De l'intérêt des princes et des Etats de la chrétienté* (1638), as it was almost certainly the best known of Rohan's works in England at the time (and since), though I am aware that, as at least one historian of French political thought has already shown, Rohan was engaged in discussions about interests from as early as 1624. See Salmon 1987, pp. 103-5. See also Keohane 1980, p. 174: 'By the time Rohan published his influential work, *De l'intérêt de princes et des Etats* in 1638, it was a well-established maxim that princes and republics are moved by interest.'

⁵ The smaller edition was reprinted in 1663 with no alteration. At this point, neither of the errata listed at the end of the 1641 printing were corrected.

⁶ Rohan 1995, p. 161: 'Les princes commandent aux peuples et l'intérêt commande aux princes. La connaissance de cet intérêt est d'autant plus relevée pardessus celle des actions des princes qu'eux-mêmes le sont pardessus les peuples. Le prince se peut tromper, son conseil peut être corrompu, mais l'intérêt seul ne peut jamais manquer.' Cf. Rohan 1640, pp. 1-2.

⁷ Rohan 1995, p. 187: 'Après avoir établi la vrai intérêt de chaque prince et Etat, il faut faire voir par le récit des principales affaires agitées dans la chrétienté depuis cinquante ans, comme les mauvais succès qui en sont ensuivis ne sont provenus que pour l'avoir délaissé, afin d'apprendre qu'en matière d'Etat on ne doit se laisser conduire aux désirs déréglés qui nous emportent souvent à entreprendre des choses au-delà de nos forces, ni aux passions violentes qui nous agitent diversement selon qu'elles nous possèdent, ni aux opinions superstitieuses qui nous donnent des scrupules mal conçus, mais à notre propre intérêt, guidé par la seule raison, qui doit être la règle de nos actions, afin que par tels exemples, nous voyions comme dans un miroir les fautes d'autrui pour en faire notre profit.' Cf. Rohan 1640, pp. 38-9.

Particularly significant for us is the fact that Rohan assigns to England the specific interest of defending Protestantism and the Reformation. He argues that, as the experience and the actions of Elizabeth bore out, ‘besides the interest which the King of England has in common with all princes, he has yet one particular, which is, that he ought thoroughly to procure the advancement of the Protestant Religion, with as much zeal as the King of Spain shows himself protector of the Catholic’.⁸ Herein, he argues, ‘is the true interest of England, which being well followed, will establish a third puissance in Christendom’.⁹

This assertion alone sparked a wide variety of claims about the ‘interest of England’.¹⁰ Perhaps the most forceful came from the Roman lawyer, Calybut Downing, who published *A Discourse Upon the Interest of England* in 1641, a different but related text. Like Rohan, Downing took the immediate context of his work to be the pan-European religious conflict. His target is Charles, who he suggests is neglecting England’s true interest, which is to intervene on the side of the Elector Palatine. Downing argues that England must intervene ‘if for no other cause, yet that the wiser world may know, that we have not forgone nor forgot our owne interest, and what we should passe for in Christendome’.¹¹ The English were therefore able to adopt Rohan’s language in order to express a conception of its role in international history and Christian eschatology which it had already fostered for a number of decades.

Downing shares with Rohan not only the point about the true interest of England, but also his personification of the state, and the assumption that the state itself has both a reason and interest of its own. He claims that ‘the State hath upon her owne reasons

⁸ Rohan 1995, pp. 183-5: ‘Par toutes ces maxims, cette sage princesse a bien fait comprendre à ses successeurs que, outré l’intérêt que l’Angleterre a commun avec tous les princes, elle en a un particulier qui doit être de procurer partout l’avancement de la religion protestante avec le meme zèle que le roi d’Espagne se montre protecteur de la catholique.’ Cf. Rohan 1640, pp. 34-7.

⁹ Rohan 1995, p. 185: ‘Voilà le vrai intérêt d’Angleterre qui étant bien suivi établira dans la chrétienté une troisième puissance.’ Cf. Rohan 1640, p. 37.

¹⁰ See also Hirst 2007, p. 411.

¹¹ Downing 1641a, p. 1.

taken those waies to ripen remedies, which were not easily reacht by any ordinary private introspection'.¹² In an earlier sermon, published by Parliament in 1641, Downing criticises those who would not act on their interests: 'States that move not neither upon anger nor hatred but upon judgement and interest, necessity, publique utility, universal safety may move for those points and cannot be mistaken in their affairs.'¹³ This notion that states cannot be mistaken appears to be taken directly from Rohan's treatise.

The freeholders of Lancaster (naming themselves the 'Countie Palatine' in solidarity with the Elector) argued 'that such persons whether Ecclesiasticall or Temporall, whose ends and interests are not the same with the Protestants of this Kingdome, may be removed from the great counsel of the Kingdome'.¹⁴ In doing this, the petitioners associate their claims with those puritans who agitated for intervention in the Palatine conflict of the 1620s. At that time it had also been claimed that the Protestant monarchy of England was responsible for aiding the other Protestant princes of Europe, due to her special place in Christian eschatology. Similarly, in 1647 the historian Thomas May explicitly reached back to Rohan's analysis of the political situation, and claimed that Charles had been 'by degrees brought, not only to forsake, but to oppose his owne interest both in civill and religious affaires, which was most unhappily seene in that cause (as the Duke of ROHAN observed,) wherein, besides the interest of all Protestants, and the honour of this Nation, the estate and livelihood of his owne children were at the height concerned'.¹⁵ As we shall see, this conception of England's 'national interest' was an idea that endured throughout the seventeenth century.

¹² Downing 1641a, pp. 1-2.

¹³ Downing 1641b, pp. 10-11. The sermon itself was delivered on 1 September 1640.

¹⁴ *To the Honourable the House of Commons now Assembled in Parliament. The Humble Petition of divers Knights, Esquires, Ministers, Gentlemen, and Freeholders of the Countie Palatine of Lancaster* 1641.

¹⁵ May 1647, p. 6.

III

In the meantime, it was crucial to persuade ordinary people that to take up arms against the king was not only legitimate, but also positively sanctioned by divine law. This was also congruent with Rohan's claim about England's true interest, as to be the bulwark of Protestantism in Europe had to also be to fight for its survival. It had to be shown that, as stated in a sermon later attributed to John Bramhall, 'a man may with good Conscience meet his God with his Arms in his hand'.¹⁶ The Independent preacher, Jeremiah Burroughs, gave expression to this sentiment in a sermon of the same year, arguing that 'God is a God of Armies. That he might expresse himselfe the more clearly, and fully interested in War-like affaires ... he styles himselfe *A man of War*'.¹⁷ This he then applies directly to a political eschatology: 'One day the Lord will convince the world, that the strength of Nations and Kingdomes consist in the interest that the godly have in this *Lord of Hosts*'.¹⁸ It was important to show that conflict with the king had divine backing, in order for many puritans to be persuaded to fight.

A number of preachers at the time of the outbreak of civil war stress the importance of the freedom of preachers and clergy for the maintenance of the common good. In particular, the Anglican Simon Ford casts this necessity in the language of "interests". This was also true of the moderate Church of Scotland minister, John Dury, who argued in 1642 that 'a Publique good is nothing else but the universall private good of everyone in the life of God' and that only 'that is properly Publique which is common, and reacheth alike unto all; and that reacheth truly to all, wherein everyone hath alike neere interest'.¹⁹ This was all a thinly-veiled attack on the Puritans. Ford states that 'in this I ... addresse my selfe to all those that would pursue Englands great Interest sincerely', but in

¹⁶ [Bramhall] 1643, pp. 14-15. The attribution to Bramhall is Thomason's.

¹⁷ Burroughs 1643, p. 5.

¹⁸ Burroughs 1643, sig. D, 4^r.

¹⁹ Dury 1642, p. 6.

the process denies the idea (which we have seen expressed by Rohan, Downing and others) that England has a special role in the defence of the Protestant cause: ‘among all these Interests, let me exhort you to look at this *piece* of the *highest* Interest of all Kingdomes, and all these Kingdomes, which I have all this while insisted upon’.²⁰ England’s interest, for these writers, lies above all therefore in peace and not necessarily in intruding upon the political stability of other states under the assumption of having a special interest to protect Protestantism.

Along with these arguments comes the claim that peaceableness is invariably to be preferred, and that this is our interest.²¹ Furthermore, these writers insist that in order to ensure what Dury constantly refers to as ‘Public Edification’, it is necessary for the public (*all* the public and not just the saints among them) to receive a proper religious education and discipline. This is crucial, as increasing conflicts between the interests of individuals required adjudication by figures of authority in order that the ordinary mass of the people could act with a clear conscience.²²

IV

The argument put forward by the royalist Henry Ferne (1602-1662) emphasises the importance of conscience.²³ Ferne, who was later to become bishop of Chester under Charles II, had preached before the king in July 1642, and had impressed him to the extent that he was appointed one of the king’s chaplains almost immediately. In *The Resolving of Conscience*, published in 1642, he questions how far it is possible for the subject to square resistance to established power with the religious duty not to respect all authority as originating in divine ordination. ‘How much safer it would be,’ he implores

²⁰ Ford 1646, pp. 10-11. See also Hirst 2007, p. 412.

²¹ It is significant that this is the argument returned to in the Restoration. In particular consider Corbet 1661 and L’Estrange 1661.

²² Dury 1644, p. 27.

²³ On Ferne’s role in the history of “conscience”, see Schochet 2001, pp. 154-5.

his readers, 'for you to be guided by the sure Rules of Conscience, and ... to suffer unjustly, then in the unwarrantable prevention of it to do unjustly'.²⁴ Ferne's strategy is to stress that, even if Parliament were in some fashion co-ordinate with the monarch, this co-ordination could not exist at the most fundamental level of sovereignty, because the king holds the sole bind over men's consciences. The people swore oaths to the king, not to parliament.²⁵

Ferne has to admit that England is (in some way) a mixed monarchy, given the admission made by Charles in his *Answer to the XIX Propositions*, in which it is stated that, 'in this Kingdom the Laws are joyntly made by a King, by a House of Peers, and by a House of Commons chosen by the People, all having free Votes and particular Privileges' and that 'therefore the Power Legally placed in both Houses is more then sufficient to prevent and restrain the power of Tyrannie'.²⁶ The implication is that the power that the two houses have traditionally exercised is enough to prevent the king from becoming tyrannical, but that the demands being made now are simply unreasonable.

Despite the limited nature of Charles's admission of mixed government, as Pocock has pointed out, one consequence was that its 'Machiavellian overtones' gave rise to the idea that Parliament might be able to govern without the monarch.²⁷ Quentin Skinner warns us against reading Charles's *Answer* 'as a concessive and conciliatory document',²⁸ but it is clear that the authors we are to study saw a very particular concession being made here. For Ferne, it was the admission (made under duress and intimidation by Parliament) that the monarch operated among the other two estates.²⁹ The Parliamentarian Charles Herle also claims for his argument the support of Charles's

²⁴ Ferne 1642, sig. ¶, 3r.

²⁵ On the importance of oaths in this period, see Vallance 2005.

²⁶ *XIX Propositions made by both Houses of Parliament, to the Kings most Excellent Majestie: With His Majesties Answer Thereunto* 1642, pp. 36-40. Cf. Kenyon 1986, pp. 18-19.

²⁷ Pocock 2003, pp. 364-5.

²⁸ Skinner 2002b, 334.

²⁹ Ferne 1643a, p. 31.

Answer.³⁰ Most importantly, however, the king's document does not describe the mixed constitution in terms of the balance or mixture of interests. Instead, he points to those who 'contrive' against him, and 'their main designe of ambition and private Interest'.³¹

One writer particularly enamoured with this idea of England's mixed constitution is Philip Hunton. Hunton was an ex-schoolmaster and Church of England clergyman, based in Westbury, Wiltshire. Although he does not deploy the vocabulary of 'interests', Hunton's *Treatise of Monarchy* introduces the notion that, if the monarch is somehow incapacitated, Parliament is legitimately able to step in and 'supply' power. His argument is that England's monarchy is fundamentally a mixed one, and not (as Ferne argued) one in which some limited powers had been, over time, extended to institutions such as Parliament at the discretion of the king. Hunton states that England's constitutional model exhibits the best balance between the powers of monarch and people: 'I conceive it unparalleled for exactnesse of true policy in the whole world; such a care for the Sovereignty of the Monarch, such a provision for the liberty of the People.'³²

Hunton is not quite prepared to accept the argument from conscience as Ferne presents it:

Many Divines [Ferne], perhaps inconsiderately, perhaps unwittingly for self ends, have beene of late yeares strong Pleadere for *Absolutenesse* of Monarchicall Power in this Land; and pressed Obedience on the Consciences of People in the utmost extremity, which can be due in the most absolute Monarchy in the world; but I seldome or never heard or read them make any difference of Powers, but usually bring their proofes from Scriptures, where subjection is commanded to the *higher Powers*, and all resistance of them forbidden.³³

But ultimately, Hunton's academic and balanced approach is unable to advocate the sovereignty of either Parliament or king as he is limited by the question of conscience (despite his initial attempt to distance himself from such questions). In the end, he has to

³⁰ Herle 1643, pp. 33-4.

³¹ *XIX Propositions* 1642, p. 25.

³² [Hunton] 1643, p. 44.

³³ [Hunton] 1643, p. 33.

concede that in cases in which the actions of the monarch are dangerous to the commonwealth, ‘if it be such as is destructive and necessitates a determination’ then it is up to the individual to determine whether it is consistent with his conscience: ‘then every Person must aide that Part, which in his best Reason and Judgement stands for publike good, against the destructive.’³⁴ To a large extent, Hunton clings to the notion that any form of political allegiance has to be tied to conscience, rather than interest.

The anonymous author of *Touching the Fundamental Lawes* (1642) is far less circumspect in the analysis of England’s mixed constitution, claiming that ‘the *Genus* which is government it selfe is divine, so that people are absolutely bound to have government, but not bound to have an absolute government’.³⁵ The author emphasises ‘the fundamentall law of *Salus populi*’ and argues that the safety of the people – rather than the king’s negative voice – is the prerogative of England.³⁶ Parliament, being ‘representatively the Publike’ and therefore better suited to determine what is necessary for the safety of the public, is therefore where power must ultimately reside.³⁷

In *The Wounded Conscience Cured* (1642), William Bridge epitomizes the parliamentary response to Ferne’s attack, drawing the Aristotelian distinction between the king (who ‘taketh pleasure in the profit and commodity of the subjects’) and the tyrant (‘whose property it is only to suck his own profit’).³⁸ He relies mainly on the argument that Parliament requires the right to maintain public safety if this role has been (in effect) abdicated by the king, and that ‘unlesse they have such a power they are no Parliament’.³⁹ He criticises Ferne directly, as ‘in his resolving of Conscience he endeavours to scare

³⁴ [Hunton] 1643, p. 73.

³⁵ *Touching the Fundamentall Lawes, or Politique Constitution of this Kingdome, the Kings Negative Voice, and the Power of Parliaments* 1642, sig. B, 3^v (pagination becomes confused after p. 11).

³⁶ *Touching the Fundamentall Lawes* 1642, pp. 6-7.

³⁷ *Touching the Fundamentall Lawes* 1642, p. 8.

³⁸ Bridge 1642, p. 8. Bridge was a leading Independent, who joined the Westminster Assembly and preached in front of the king in 1643, exhibiting open hostility to the Queen.

³⁹ Bridge 1642, p.15.

those who are tender with the word of damnation'.⁴⁰ He goes deeper into the argument made by royalists, who based their claims on the edict against resistance in Romans 13.1-2. Bridge suggests that to claim Parliament is collectively subject under the biblical ordinance, 'is to straiten the Text, as never any yet hath straitned it'.⁴¹ He maintains the posture that the actions of Parliament are only ever designed to maintain the position of the king and not to harm him; and 'what better service ... can a true subject performe to his Majesties person', he asks, 'then by force of Armes to deliver him out of the hands of those spoylers that lye in wait for his pretious soule?'⁴²

In another defence of Parliament a year later (again written partly in response to Ferne), Bridge stresses the argument that the king's power can come only from the people. Having established in *The Wounded Conscience* that 'the best government is that, where the King and people strike a covenant at his coronation',⁴³ in *The Truth of the Times Vindicated* (1643), he claims that 'the Prince or supreme Magistrate hath no more power then what is communicated to him from the communitie'.⁴⁴ However, this claim is made in the continuing context of the argument that Parliament's actions are based principally on self-defence against the impositions of the monarch. 'Wee only say' claims Bridge, that 'the people have a power to defend themselves and when cause requires them to excite and actuacte that Power which was always residing in them'.⁴⁵

In a sermon delivered to the House of Commons in November 1643, Bridge reminds members that 'the frown of a Prince may some times stand with the favour of God'.⁴⁶ He also acknowledges that their plight is a difficult one, and one that involves a great degree of personal sacrifice. 'Your work', he tells them, 'may be disadvantageous unto your own

⁴⁰ Bridge 1642, p.10.

⁴¹ Bridge 1642, p.18.

⁴² Bridge 1642, sig. F, 3^v (pagination becomes confused after p.24).

⁴³ Bridge 1642, sig. F, 2^r.

⁴⁴ Bridge 1643b, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Bridge 1643b, sig. H, 1^v (pagination becomes confused after p.20).

⁴⁶ Bridge 1643a, sig. A, 2^v.

particular interests', since 'your publike employments cannot but hinder your private affaires'.⁴⁷ Yet this puts parliamentarians in the same position as Biblical leaders (he names Moses and Joshua), who were forced to make similar sacrifices while 'employed upon Gods service'.⁴⁸ Thus, it is clear that Bridge, along with most of the advocates of the mixed constitution in the 1640s, had little place for interests in his justifications of resistance to the king's power. There was one writer, however, who argued that the two houses of parliament had particular interests capable of explaining their collective superiority over the king.

V

Charles Herle (1598-1659) challenges the very assumption that the debt of political obedience is a matter of duty and conscience. Very little has been written about Herle.⁴⁹ An unpublished article written in the nineteenth century claims that 'he left no work of any permanent interest, excepting his now forgotten Moral Discourse called, *Worldly Policy and Moral Prudence*, published in 1653'.⁵⁰ Herle was a Presbyterian divine, who began his professional career as a tutor to James Stanley, who was later to become a general in the king's army. Like Bridge, Herle was elected to the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1643, charged with resolving a number of doctrinal divisions. The most important role he plays for our purposes is as advocate of England's mixed constitution and the ability of the Houses of Lords and Commons to act together in the absence of the king.

In his *Fuller Answer to a Treatise Written by Doctor Fernee* (December 1642), Herle endorses the view of England as a mixed constitution, but locates the ultimate deciding

⁴⁷ Bridge 1643a, sig. A, 2^v-3^r.

⁴⁸ Bridge 1643a, sig. A, 3^r.

⁴⁹ For examples of brief or minor mentions of Herle's political thought, see: Gunn 1969, pp. 8-10; Tuck 1993, pp. 222-3.

⁵⁰ Bailey 1877, p. 16. Although Bailey acknowledges that this book went through a number of editions, he doesn't mention that in 1655 an entirely new section (on 'Christian Wisdom') was added, and the work renamed *Wisdomes Tripos, or rather its Inscription, Detur Sapienti, in Three Treatises*.

will in Parliament rather than the king. He argues that arbitrariness has to reside somewhere in the constitution – ‘else our forefathers should not convey that same government to us which they began, they cannot bind us in that wherein they were themselves free’ – but that the law places this ultimate arbitrariness in the two houses of Parliament, ‘where this arbitraries allayed and ballanced by *number, trust, self interest*, it is best secured from doing hurt’.⁵¹ Thus, the balance of the various interests of monarch, lords and commons will prevent the monarchy from acting tyrannically.

As early as Parliament’s *Humble Remonstrance and Petition* in 1641, it was claimed that ‘the Rights and Priviledges of *Parliament* are the Birth-right and Inheritance not only of themselves, but of the whole Kingdome, wherein every one of your [the King’s] Subjects is interressed’.⁵² Furthermore, in his *Observations* of 1642, Parliament’s most prominent propagandist, the lawyer Henry Parker, provides a precedent for Herle’s claim that Parliament and the king constitute two separate interests. He argues in favour of the mixed constitution, that if the king has no parliament to keep him in check, ‘what Law then have we remaining, then the Kings will?’⁵³ As with all Parliament’s arguments in the early years of the conflict, Parker’s emphasises that they do not desire to see Charles removed, but that his attempt to rule by his personal will alone is unacceptable to the people, as to give the king sole discretion to decide the legitimacy of his own actions is to make ourselves slaves:⁵⁴

The Parliament does not deny the King a true reall Interest in any thing held by him, either *in jure Corona, or in jure Personae*, yet meerly because it affirms, That in the same thing the State hath an Interest Paramount in cases of publique extremity; by virtue of which it may justly seize, and use the same for its own necessary preservation.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Herle 1642, p. 17.

⁵² *To the Kings most excellent Majestie. The Humble Remonstrance and Petition of the Lords and Commons in Parliament* 1641.

⁵³ [Parker] 1642, p. 37. On Parker as theorist of the mixed constitution, see Skinner 2002b, p. 335.

⁵⁴ [Parker] 1642, pp. 43-4. See also *Animadversions upon those Notes which the late Observer hath published ...* 1642, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁵ [Parker] 1642, p. 33.

So Parker had argued that Parliament carried the ‘Paramount’ interest, which was the safety of the people, and opposed this to the interest of the king, which (it is implied) is the holding of arbitrary power over the people.

It was Herle, however, who tied the people’s obligation firmly to Parliament in the name of an identity of interests. He justifies Parliament’s pre-eminence by arguing that its members are more apt to legislate for the people, as they share the peoples interests: ‘As their *interests* with us tye them more to do *aright*, so our *elections* of them tye us more to suffer what they doe if not *aright*.’ Thus, we find Herle arguing that we are bound to Parliament (rather than the king) not because of any greater tie of conscience, but because those elected to Parliament represent our interests, and ‘what *they* do *we* do in them, and selfe wrong is seldom selfe revenged’.⁵⁶ In other words, the actions of our representatives in parliament are effectively *our* actions. In saying this, Herle is adding much more weight to the earlier commonplace that ‘the *ends* of Parliament are briefly ... that the interest of the people might be satisfied’ and ‘that the King might be better counselled’.⁵⁷

Herle’s argument is underpinned by his confident assertion that interests are simply a more reliable guide to allegiance than factors such as oaths, which are bound to conscience. Thus, he argues, ‘it was the wisdom of this government, considering mens aptnesse rather to warpe after their *interests* and *ends*, then to be kept upright by their *skills* and *oaths*, to trust it rather to many independent mens *interests*, then a few dependent mens *oaths*’. Oaths are characterised here as properties of creatures and instruments, rather than of autonomous individuals. Interests, on the other hand, are painted by Herle as reliable and steadfast ties of obligation which can be applied to independent, rather than subject, individuals, as ‘every dayes experience tels us that *interests* are better state

⁵⁶ Herle 1642, p. 18.

⁵⁷ [Ward] 1642, p. 13.

security then oaths, specially when those *interests* have the command of those *oaths* to bind all that *skill* too to their service'.⁵⁸ This idea – that interests are a more effective tie of obligation than oaths – was later quoted by the prosecutor at the king's trial in 1649.⁵⁹

It could be argued that this insistence is a part of Herle's religious project, which was to construct an independent church government on Presbyterian grounds.⁶⁰ He focuses on interest so keenly in order to distance civil authority from ecclesiastical authority. Since interests are a determining factor in the political sphere, politics and politicians are shown to be unhelpful in the religious sphere, which is lead by truth instead. Once obligation to the Anglican establishment had been separated from religious duty, the faculty of conscience could more easily be returned to a specifically *ecclesiastical* establishment, where it belonged. The claim that Parliament binds people's interests, but not their consciences points to a very rigid distinction between the powers of the church and the powers of civil government, in a way which accords with independent Presbyterian government.

Herle does not want to say that all civil magistracy is of such limited authority. If we look to his sermon entitled *David's Reserve, and Rescue* (1645), we find that the ancient kings of Israel, receiving their authority directly from God, have a much broader basis of power. David is described as 'a type of no earthly King, but a type, or rather embleme of Gods Church in all succeeding ages'.⁶¹ In other words, the English kings do not have the same kind of power as the monarchs that ruled in ancient Israel.

⁵⁸ Herle 1642, pp. 17-18. This is repeated in Herle 1643, p. 20.

⁵⁹ See Cook 1647, p. 44.

⁶⁰ On Herle's sympathy for the Independents in the Westminster Assembly, see Paul 1985, pp. 151-3, 228-30.

⁶¹ Herle 1645, p. 11. Sermon delivered on 5 November 1644.

Ferne quickly responded to Herle in April 1643. Herle issued a second answer by May, and Ferne produced the final word in their exchange by the end of the year.⁶² In the first of his rebuttals, Ferne differentiates between the approaches of Bridge and Herle by showing that the latter argues from the principles of the natural right of the people to defend themselves against a tyrant, while the latter argues from the constitutionally allotted powers:

Mr. *Bridge* gives us proofes for this way of preservation; First, from the Law of Nature, *selfe preservation is naturall for a Man, for a Community; and therefore when a Community shall trust a Prince with their welfare, that act of trust is but a positive Law, and cannot destroy the Naturall Law, which is selfe-preservation*, pag. 2. But the *Fuller Answer* will tell him there must be a Constitution to enable them to this self-preservation.⁶³

Ferne employs this as a strategy to undermine resistant outright. In his final word on the matter in November 1643, he admits the individual and (it is implied) the natural right to defend themselves if they were personally assaulted or their particular property was threatened by the monarch. That either of these things has occurred is entirely deniable, and the vast majority of Parliament's complaints regard general abuses of the king's power, rather than specific ones.⁶⁴ This seems to Ferne to be enough to deal with those arguing from the natural right of Parliament to defend themselves, but he acknowledges that Herle's particular *civil* claims about the competing 'interests' of the mixed constitution, will require a different approach.

Ferne objects that if the interests of the two houses of Parliament are to be used to balance the tyrannical potential of the monarchy, then surely it would be possible for the Lords and the king to ally themselves against the Commons if the latter were acting

⁶² Herle's second answer expands on a number of his points against Ferne, but the passages on interests remain essentially the same, so I feel justified in making reference to Ferne's two rebuttals of 1643 interchangeably.

⁶³ Ferne 1643b, p. 42. This might also be said to be true of the difference between Herle and Parker.

⁶⁴ Ferne 1643a, pp. 8-10.

tyrannically.⁶⁵ In the process, he advances a theory not only of the balance of private interests, but of an overarching public interest, to which they are all subordinate. For Ferne, Herle's claim is that 'Arbitrarines [is] best secured from doing hurt in the Votes of Parliament by reason of their *number, trust, and selfe interest*'. He argues that 'Arbitrarines is likely to do the least hurt, where it depends upon those that have severall wills and, severall private Interests, as the three Estates have, but whose publike Interest is the same'. As a result, 'if the King pursue His private interest, it is crossed by the private interest of the Subject, is they theirs, then will his private interest hinder the compassing of it' and 'they may meet in their publique interests the good and welfare of the whole State, which is best for them both'.⁶⁶ On this point, Ferne attempts to turn Hunton's analysis against Herle, by stating that 'the Author of the *Treatise of Monarchy*, doth sufficiently shew, that to place such a final Resolution and declarative Judgement in the two Houses, doth make them supream, and this is no Monarchy'.⁶⁷ It is important here that Ferne is the one to introduce the vocabulary of a specifically *public* interest, even if he does only mention it once.⁶⁸

Ferne also repudiates Herle's acceptance of the idea that men are more easily won over by their interests than by their duty. Firstly he objects that those who are not able to elect exact representatives of themselves will not be equally empowered, as 'this reason from representation and Election concerns only one of the Houses'. 'It would trouble this Answerer', Ferne fumes, 'to give the Clergy any assurance from these mutuall interests'.⁶⁹ The principle of election is limited, since the separate estate constituted by the clergy will thereby become disempowered.

⁶⁵ Ferne 1643b, pp. 27-8, 34-5.

⁶⁶ Ferne 1643b, pp. 36-7.

⁶⁷ Ferne 1643a, pp. 49-50. This was the only text in which Ferne addresses the *Treatise*, and he claims from the beginning not to know the identity of its author.

⁶⁸ At least one modern commentator wrongly attributes the idea of 'public interest' to Herle, though he does not use the vocabulary: Mathiowetz 2011, p. 91.

⁶⁹ Ferne 1643b, p. 38.

Secondly, Ferne expresses concern that Herle is claiming for Parliament a place of greater absolutism than he would claim, even for the king:

There is nothing more usuall in these mens mouthes then the Law is our inheritance, we are born unto it. It is true, and it concernes us to look to it; but shall our freedom and inheritance, our Petition of Right, our liberties and Priviledges be only good against the King, and the resolution of the Houses *inevitable* to us for all our interests, all we have? So this Answerer would make us beleieve.⁷⁰

Ferne thus warns against the assumption that Parliament is any better than the monarch at determining the common good, and that experience has shown us ‘how men of publike trust may, and have pursued their private interests under pretence of the publique good’.⁷¹ It could be inferred that the multiple private interests of the two houses are more liable to corruption than the individual person of the monarch, and therefore more likely to cause to act against our conscience.

Herle is not only challenged on the grounds that to support Parliament is to act against conscience; there is also the objection that he is simply wrong to claim that Parliament have the greatest identity with the people’s interest. This further argument is particularly expanded by the royalist, Dudley Digges, in *The Unlawfulness of Subjects Taking up Arms Against their Sovereigne* (1643). Digges claims that the king’s ‘interest is the same with that of the People, which is state security’.⁷² Like Ferne, Digges argues that his allegiance is to an overriding *public* interest, rather than to the private interests of Parliament. ‘I am confident’, he states, that ‘a mistake of this *mixt Monarchy* hath engaged many well-meaning men against the King, to the overthrow of our Lawes, which the simpler part are perswaded they fight for’ and who are therefore ‘to be made unhappy instruments to advance private interests with publique hearts’.⁷³ In many ways, the

⁷⁰ Ferne 1643b, p. 38.

⁷¹ Ferne 1643b, p. 38. Ferne is infuriated by the fact that Herle ignores this aspect of his reply: Ferne 1643a, pp. 49-50.

⁷² [Digges] 1643, p. 20.

⁷³ [Digges] 1643, p. 66.

royalist argument had really not moved on from that made by Charles in his *Answer*, in its claim that the power of private interests is corrupting the desire of many to contribute to the common good.

Ultimately of course, Parliament emerged victorious and, with it, the notion of Parliamentary sovereignty. It was towards the end of the civil war, that Parliament would have its own arguments fired back at itself, and many writers would begin to question the assumption that the people's obligation was indeed tied to Parliament by an identification of interests.

VI

The Levellers were the first opponents of the monarchy to put pressure on the idea that Parliament held the monopoly of identity with the people's interests. They achieved this result in part by the introduction of the idea of 'corrupt interests'. They used this concept to put forward the claim that certain parts of Parliament had become corrupted by power. The third article of the second version of *The Agreement of the People* of 1649 equated factionalism with the maintenance of 'corrupt interests'.⁷⁴ In the same year, John Lilburne warned against army grantees such as Cromwell as engendering a 'corrupt interest'.⁷⁵ The natural reaction to this concern was to condemn private interests entirely.

William Walwyn, one of the leaders of the Leveller movement at the time, condemns all forms of interest, and promotes 'selfe-deniall' both for worldly and divine causes.⁷⁶ Since the beginning of the conflict, Walwyn had advocated the religious toleration and freedom of conscience. It is perhaps for this reason that he considers interests in his early works to be those deplorable ends sought by the clergy in their endeavour to hold

⁷⁴ *An Agreement of the People* (1649) in Sharp 1998, p. 171.

⁷⁵ Lilburne 1998, p. 144.

⁷⁶ [Walwyn] 1643, pp. 32-3; [Walwyn] 1644, sig. A, 3^v-4^r.

power over the laity.⁷⁷ The author of the anonymous tract, *No Interest Beyond the Principall or, the Court Camisado* (1648) describes ‘Interest’ as that ‘which ... is now the onely Idol that men fal [sic] down and worship’.⁷⁸ However, very quickly, private interests went from being something that were despicable and morally repugnant, to something that everyone must have to ensure their security. The principal occasion when this argument was deployed was the Putney debates between the radicals and the army grandees of 28-30 October 1647.

Stephen Engelmann argues that, for the debaters at Putney, the divine will and the public interest are equivalent. This has the convenient effect of allowing Engelmann to link the two days’ proceedings by this common theme.⁷⁹ But the vocabulary of interest is used much more powerfully in the second day’s debate surrounding the franchise than it is in the first day’s discussion, which focuses on the legitimate grounds for the breaking of oaths and engagements. Engelmann identifies the Putney debates as an important site for the development of the idea of the public interest. But if we follow the use of this vocabulary more closely, we see that only Cromwell becomes concerned with the public interest towards the end of the debates. He does so, not to argue for an identity between the public interest and the divine will, but in order to resolve a particular conflict:

Surely what God would have us doe hee does nott desire wee should steppe out of the way for itt. This is the caution, on the one hand that wee doe noe wronge to one or other, and that wee abstaine from all appearance of wronge, and for that purpose avoide the bringing of a scandall to the name of God, and to his people uppon whome his name is call’d. On the other hand, I have butt this to say: that those who doe apprehend obligations lying uppon them – either by a generall duty or particularly in relation to the thinges that wee have declar’d, a duty of justice, or a duty in regard of that Engagement – that they would clearlie come to this resolution, that if they found in their judgements and consciences that those Engagements lead to anything which really cannott consist with the libertie and safetie and publique interest of this Nation, they would account the Generall

⁷⁷ [Walwyn] 1644, pp. 74-8.

⁷⁸ *No Interest Beyond the Principall or, the Court Camisado* 1648, p. 2. See also Gunn 1969, p. 39.

⁷⁹ Engelmann 2003, pp. 124-8.

[duty/obligation] paramount [to] the other, soe farre as nott to oppose any other that would doe better for the Nation then they will doe.⁸⁰

Thus, the language of a specifically *public* interest is used here not to identify any almighty plan, but to distinguish between two types of earthly, human ambition.⁸¹

The radicals at Putney claim for themselves the right to break any engagement that is unjust. John Wildman expresses concern that there is an increasingly powerful inclination to follow even those engagements that are palpably unjust. There is, he argues, ‘a principle much spreading and much to my trouble, and that is this’:

that when persons once bee engaged, though the Engagement appeare to be unjust, yett the person must sett downe and suffer under itt; and that therefore, in case a Parliament, as a true Parliament, doth anythinge unjustly, if wee bee engaged to submitt to the Lawes that they shall make, if they make an unjust law, though they make an unrighteous law, yett wee must sweare obedience.⁸²

This follows the prevalent Leveller sentiment we have already encountered, and was of great concern to figures such as Ireton, who saw in Wildman’s argument an opening to anarchy. ‘What right hath any man to any thinge’ Henry Ireton inquires, ‘if you lay nott that principle, that wee are to keepe covenant?’⁸³

What is most intriguing here is the fact that none of this debate is couched in the vocabulary of interests, especially as the following day’s language is suffused by it. This might be explained by the fact that, as we have seen, the language of conscience and the language of interest were diametrically opposed. It was anathema to the Putney debaters to claim that they could default on their engagements in the name of interest. Speakers on both sides make the claim almost exclusively in terms of conscience and divine command. Indeed, on the first day one of the only mentions of interests comes from

⁸⁰ Firth 1992, pp. 382-3 (all references here are made to vol. 1). I prefer to use the Firth edition over Woodhouse’s more modern edition, as the former makes fewer alterations to Clarke’s original text (see Mendle 2001, pp. 3-4). I have followed some, but not all, of Firth’s alterations and additions to the text.

⁸¹ Cf. Engelmann 2003, pp. 127-8.

⁸² Firth 1992, p. 260.

⁸³ Firth 1992, pp. 263-4.

Ireton's desire to prove that he is committed to the 'interest of the Kingdome' and has 'suffered' for it just as much as the rank-and-file soldiers.⁸⁴

The case is entirely different when it comes to deciding how to apportion the franchise. This can largely be accounted for because it is no longer a question of determining the right to break promises (subject to the rule of conscience), but more of ascertaining who holds a political stake in the composition of the government. When determining the latter it makes much more sense to make appeals to interest.

The focus of the second day's debate is inaugurated by the reading of the *Agreement of the People*, followed by the repetition of its first article, which stipulates that the franchise might be made more equitable:⁸⁵

That the people of England being at this day very unequally distributed by counties, cities and boroughs for the election of their deputies in parliament, ought to be more indifferently proportioned according to the number of the inhabitants: the circumstances whereof, for number, place, and manner, are to be set down before the end of this present parliament.⁸⁶

The debate then goes into great detail about what such reforms would entail. Only the triumphant general of the New Model Army, Oliver Cromwell, is keen to steer the debaters back to what they agree on: 'Everybodie heere would bee willing, that the Representative might bee mended, that is, itt might bee better then itt is.'⁸⁷ Otherwise, the debate soon turns economic; between Ireton, who 'would have an eye to propertie',⁸⁸ and Colonel Rainsborough, who at this stage puts forward his most celebrated claim:

I thinke itt's cleare, that every man that is to live under a Governement ought first by his owne consent to putt himself under that Governement; and I doe thinke

⁸⁴ Firth 1992, p. 232.

⁸⁵ Firth 1992, p. 299.

⁸⁶ *An Agreement of the People* ... (1647), in Sharp 1998, pp. 93-4. Contrast with the first article of *An agreement of the free people of England* (1649), p. 170: 'The supreme authority of England ... shall be and reside henceforth in a Representative of the People consisting of four hundred persons, but no more; in the choice of whom (according to natural right) all men of the age of one-and-twenty years and upwards (not being servants, or receiving alms, or having served the late king in arms or voluntary contributions) shall have their voices, and be capable of being elected to that supreme trust.'

⁸⁷ Firth 1992, p. 328. This interjection reflects Cromwell's constant fear of disunity during these debates.

⁸⁸ Firth 1992, p. 306.

that the poorest man in England is nott att all bound in a stricte sence to that Governement that hee hath not had a voice to putt himself under; and I am confident that when I have heard the reasons against itt, somethinge will bee said to answer those reasons, insoemuch that I should doubt whether I was an Englishman or noe that should doubt of these things.⁸⁹

It is in this context that the vocabulary of interest becomes so important in the Putney debates, and it is Ireton who introduces it. Ireton objects to Rainsborough's complacent assertion that just anyone should be able to have a say in determining the power to which they are subjected. Instead, 'in chusing those that shall determine what lawes wee shall bee ruled by heere,' he argues, 'noe person hath a right to this, that hath nott a permanent fixed interest in this Kingedome'.⁹⁰ By 'permanent fixed interest' here is clearly meant ownership of immovable property. The word interest is then taken up by other speakers in the debate, but only in the original sense that it has been used by Ireton, as a substitute for property.

He goes on to warn that by altering the constitution in this way, 'wee shall plainly goe to take away all property and interest that any man hath, either in land by inheritance, or in estate by possession, or any thinge else'.⁹¹ When he is pressed to define what is meant by 'permanent', Ireton stresses that he means the possession of land, rather than moveable wealth, such as money. Only land can guarantee that someone has an interest, and 'hee that is heere to day and gone to morrow, I doe nott see that hee hath such a permanent interest'.⁹² Figures such as Rainsborough appeal to the idea that the franchise should be held universally, because it is a natural right. He states that it is only reasonable to think that 'the poorest man in England is nott att all bound in a stricte sence to that Governement that hee hath not had a voice to putt himself under'.⁹³ But it is not suggested in the subsequent dialogue that there is any basis for 'interest' other than

⁸⁹ Firth 1992, pp. 300-1.

⁹⁰ Firth 1992, pp. 301-2.

⁹¹ Firth 1992, p. 303.

⁹² Firth 1992, p. 308.

⁹³ Firth 1992, pp. 300-1.

property. Rather, those who argue for universal suffrage adopt a strategy which does not involve an appeal to interests at all.

Mathiowetz has recently argued that by appealing to interests the Levellers were attempting to formulate a new juridical and legal identity, and this was indeed a theme which ran through such claims we have encountered which tie interests close to property or propriety.⁹⁴ For some, it thus becomes clear that it is crucial, not necessarily to have a stake in the common or public interest, but to secure for yourself a particular interest of your own. This is put quite starkly in a Digger pamphlet of 1650:

We are urged to go forth and Act in this righteous work, because of our present necessity, and want of the comfort which belongs to our Creation, that the earth being inclosed into the hands of a few, whereby time, custome and usurping Lawes have made particular Interests for some, and not for all: so that these great Taskmasters will allow us none of the earth whilst we are alive, but onely when we are dead, they will afford us just as much as will make the length of our graves, because they cannot then keep it from us, and that then we should be equall with them.⁹⁵

It has therefore become clearly established that in order to hold status, it is important to secure for oneself a certain and particular interest, and this is generally seen in terms of land. This idea of *possession* of interests also gives rise to the notion that we are the best suited to determine our own interests, and that no one else has the right to tell us what our interests are. The clearest Leveller thinker in this respect is Richard Overton.

In a pamphlet published in 1645 Overton envisages the trial of a character given the name of Mr. Persecution, which he writes under his pseudonym 'Martin Marpriest'. The trial ends when the presiding judge, Parliament, condemns Persecution back to Hell, where he came from.⁹⁶ In the middle of proceedings, 'Mr. State-pollicy' (a member of the 'Jury of Life and Death') comments that no particular person should be excluded from

⁹⁴ Mathiowetz 2011, ch. 3.

⁹⁵ *A Declaration of the grounds and Reasons, why we the poor Inhabitants of the Parrish of Iver in Buckinghamshire, have begun to digge and manure the common and wast Land belonging to the aforesaid Inhabitants ...* (1650) in Hopton 1989, pp. 31-2.

⁹⁶ [Overton] 1645, p. 46.

the political community on the basis of their particular interests: ‘al [sic] the different members being wrapt up in the skine of one constitution, need no stronger obligation, to oblige the whole then their owne interest’.⁹⁷ Individuals need no longer rely on parliament to represent their interests, since they themselves are best qualified to oblige themselves.

For Overton, every individual is the best judge of their own interests, and others should not be allowed to convince us otherwise. In another pamphlet, published in 1647 he asks rhetorically, ‘can any man tell better than your selves, where your shooe pincheth you and what is most expedient for you to do?’ and answers with the warning to ‘never render your selves so ridiculous, as to be led like children and fooles by the nose; to be made stalking horses for other mens designs, whose interests are dissonant, and inconsistent with yours.’⁹⁸ This was entirely in-keeping with the Leveller’s suspicion of parliamentary overreach, and the notion that Parliament did not always live up to its claim to identify with the interests of the people. Instead, the people began to develop a corporate identity which was entirely separate from their representatives in Parliament.

Thus, perhaps the most lasting use of the vocabulary of interests was to indicate the distinction between the interest of the people and the interest of the king made by some Levellers toward the end of the civil wars, and this will be the driving theme behind much of the remainder of this thesis. This notion was present from the early 1640s. A petition to the king of 1642 in York seems to indicate that the people perceived their corporate interest to be liberty from arbitrary power:

We immediately went to the King and besought him that since we were continually discountenanced by him, in the face of the Country, that he would be pleased to let us know in particular wherein we had given the occasion; for we otherwise

⁹⁷ [Overton] 1645, p. 29.

⁹⁸ [Overton] 1647b, pp. 10-11. See also Gunn 1969, p. 24.

conceived we were deprived of that Liberty, which was our due in respect of that Interest we had there.⁹⁹

In *An Appeale from the degenerate Representative Body, the Commons of England* (1647), Overton commented in a section ‘Concerning Parliaments’ that all unelected titles be removed ‘for the better security of the interest and power of the people’.¹⁰⁰ Parliament was to be subject to the standard of the interest and power of the people, just as they themselves had sought to limit the monarch.

Later, the Leveller and Fifth Monarchist, John Warr offers a clearer and more forceful interpretation of this competition of interests in the state, in which the king’s interest consists in holding arbitrary power over the people, and the people’s interest consists in being free from the threat of this arbitrary power. First, he refers to the king’s interest, which is described as ‘prerogative’. Warr describes how, ‘to advance their interest, kings and princes have politics and principles of their own, and certain state maxims,’ principles which he attribute to Machiavelli’s *Prince*.¹⁰¹ This is echoed in William Walwyn’s *A Manifestation* (1649), in which he characterises the Levellers’ ‘principles and maxims of government’ as ‘fundamentally opposite to the prerogative and king’s interest’.¹⁰² He further warns that the people’s interest is just as threatened by the ‘privilege’ of Parliament as it is by the arbitrary aspirations of princes.¹⁰³ Finally, Warr defines the people’s interest as resting in ‘liberty’, and goes on to stress that the only way to prevent this liberty from being infringed is to ensure that the interests of the people’s representatives are tied as closely together as possible: ‘the interest between Parliament and people must not be discontinued’.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the Levellers came to characterise English

⁹⁹ *A letter from the Right Honourable Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, Sir Hugh Cholmley, Sir Philip Stapleton, Sir Henry Cholmly, Committees of the Commons House of Parliament residing at York* 1642, sig. A, 2r.

¹⁰⁰ [Overton] 1647a, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ Warr 1992, p. 74.

¹⁰² Walwyn 1998, p. 162.

¹⁰³ Warr 1992, p. 77.

¹⁰⁴ Warr 1992, pp. 77-8.

politics as being a constant struggle between various interests in the state. But, as we shall see in the next section, this was a method of analysis which had already been developed (and perhaps to a much more sophisticated extent) by Marchamont Nedham.

VII

Marchamont Nedham (1620-1678) was one of the first professional journalists, a serial turncoat during the civil war, and prepared to accuse both sides of neglecting the common good in favour of their own private interests.¹⁰⁵ He began as a quasi-republican writer working on behalf of the parliamentary forces, before becoming a royalist in 1646-7. He returned to the republican cause in 1650, and wrote many of his most famous and important works during the Commonwealth and Protectorate.¹⁰⁶ Following the Restoration in 1660, Nedham conformed once again with the new regime, but became quiet on political matters, though he became briefly involved with the controversy surrounding the first earl of Shaftesbury's opposition in 1673-4.¹⁰⁷

This is perhaps the period in which Nedham's references to interest are most significant and influential. He does not employ the vocabulary of interests in his first major book-length work, *Vox Plebis* (1645), though he does demonstrate his allegiance to the Leveller cause, defending the liberties of John Lilburne, which he believes have been trampled due to too much power being vested in the Lords, preventing Lilburne from receiving a fair trial in front of his peers in the Commons.¹⁰⁸ But Nedham *does* deploy the vocabulary of interests innovatively in his authorship of the Parliamentary newsbook,

¹⁰⁵ *Mercurius Britannicus* no. 52 (30 September – 7 October 1644), p. 410; no. 61 (9-16 December 1644), p. 479; *Mercurius Pragmaticus* no. 26 (7-14 March 1648), sig. B, 1^v. Nedham published two series of *Pragmaticus*, one between 14 September 1647 and 28 March 1648 and the second between 28 March 1648 and 9 January 1649. I have retained the original numbering in the footnotes, and included the dates of publication. In order to identify which numbers were genuinely authored by Nedham, I am indebted to the analysis in Peacey 2004a, pp. 50-6.

¹⁰⁶ See chapter 3 below.

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 5 below.

¹⁰⁸ [Nedham] 1646.

Mercurius Britannicus, which he was instrumental in producing between 1643 and 1646 (albeit with varying responsibility and a shifting brief). It is in this period that he appears to develop the conception of politics as the process of continual conflicts between different interests. This is something that historians such as Jason Peacey and Blair Worden have pointed out, but they do not highlight specific points at which this process can be seen to be happening.¹⁰⁹ There are at least three instances we can find in *Britannicus* that provide precedents for such a domestication of interests.

The original contributing editor to *Britannicus* was not Nedham, but Thomas Audley. It was only after the fiftieth issue of the newsbook that Audley was forced to take a step back and allow his junior, Nedham to take over the day-to-day running of *Britannicus*.¹¹⁰ Early in the life of *Britannicus*, Audley rhetorically asks, ‘since this government appears to be mixed, what is the interest of each [part]?’ and answers that ‘the interest of the Monarchicall part is a fiduciary interest of trust and depositorinesse, and though time and artifice had almost set it up higher by casting the other downe, yet when the balances goe right, you shall see the scales will scarce turne’.¹¹¹ As is to be expected from a parliamentary newsbook, *Britannicus* here supports the view that the monarchical part of England’s mixed constitution is vested with power as a *trust* from the people, and must be kept in balance with the other parts of the constitution (the aristocratic part in the House of Lords and the democratic part in the House of Commons).

Audley’s second contribution comes at the very end of his direct authorship of *Britannicus*.¹¹² In Number 51, he claims:

I have got the successe I aimed at, the uncheating, the undeluding, the *undeceiving*, the *unmasquing*, the *uncovering*, the *un-Oxfording*, the *un-Bishoping*, and I hope the *un-Common-Prayering* of the Kingdom too: and now if any other (whose leasure serves

¹⁰⁹ Peacey 2009, p. 89; Worden 1995, pp. 317-19.

¹¹⁰ Peacey 2005, pp. 517-43.

¹¹¹ *Mercurius Britannicus* no. 26 (5-12 March 1644), p. 206.

¹¹² Cf. Worden 1995, p. 307. Worden writes as though these are Nedham’s contributions, but it seems more feasible that they are designed to be part of Audley’s valedictory remarks.

them to write beyond all these) take up the notion of *Britanicus*, I must give him this advice, that he dip in the same Inke that I have done, that he spare neither *friend*, nor *foe*, that his *quill* be a pen for the Publike onely, that he venture through the provocations both of friends and enemies, that he speake truth to the *King*, as well as to Common people, to Queenes, as well as to Gentlewomen of a lower Rancke, and now I must speake to all I writ to, in their severall Classis, before I fold up my Paper.¹¹³

He then goes on to provide an analysis of each domestic political group in turn. Though he does not do this in the vocabulary of interests, this does make a crucial move towards the style of analysis Nedham is to undertake three years later in *The Case of the Kingdom*.

The third, and most important precedent in *Britanicus* comes in a series of editorials, published in November and December 1645, by which point Nedham is certainly the author. Nedham mimics Rohan's analytical style, asking what is in the interest of the various European states as they stood in 1645. In particular, he aims to interrogate how likely it is for the other European powers to step into the English conflict in support of Charles, and he operates on the assumption that their interests will be the best way of ascertaining this.¹¹⁴ 'Wherein consists the last hope of the *Malignants*?' Nedham asks, and (in answering) lays out his plan for the following numbers:

They [these 'malignants'] labour with a strange *Phantasie*, that though the *King* should be beaten quite out at home, yet he will be able to accomplish his designe by assistance from foraigne parts. But to convince them, and inform others, I can and will make it evident (though but a puny *State-monger*) by Reason drawn from the present *ingagement* and *interest* of each particular *Prince* and *State* in *Christendom*, that very few (or none of them) can contribute any support to the *King*. For it is a *Maxime* in *Policie*, Whatsoever the affections of *Princes* are, they must keep in a *direct line* to, and be swayed each one by their proper *Interest*; which whosoever swerves from, must of necessity prejudice, if not bring ruine to his own *Estate*. This being laid for an impregnable *foundation*, I will next week in the first place consider, whether the present *Interest* of the State of *Spaine* will permit them to take part with, or assist the *King* in the present Affaires of *England*: and so on (week by week) with the rest.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Mercurius Britanicus* no. 51 (23-30 September 1644), pp. 399-400.

¹¹⁴ *Mercurius Britanicus* no. 105 (10-17 November 1645), p. 935; no. 106 (17-24 November 1645), pp. 943-4; no. 107 (24 November – 1 December 1645), p. 952.

¹¹⁵ *Mercurius Britanicus* no. 104 (3-11 November 1645), p. 928.

He concludes that the interests of the Spanish and the French are to prevent each other becoming more powerful, and that the Dutch hold their interest in siding with the French in this competition. Of the major European powers he discusses, only the Danish king has an interest in intervening on the side of the king, and even then, only because he is Charles's cousin. The style of reasoning Nedham adopts here is lifted directly but silently from Rohan's 1638 treatise.¹¹⁶

In issue 108 he asks the seemingly innocuous question 'whether it be convenient to handle the *Interests* of other *States*, beside those already examined?' However, his answer is surprisingly taciturn. Nedham begins by suggesting that 'I should not think it amisse to *State* the true *Interest* of the *Parliament* of *England*, as they remaine now ingaged'. But then he refuses to say what that interest of Parliament might be on the grounds that 'this I dare not doe, unlesse commanded, lest while I endeavour to satisfie others, I bring trouble on my selfe; for such there are as will be captious at *Britanicus*, though he produce no other but *Truth* and *Reason*, yet for my owne pleasure I will doe it, and when I see *occasion*, make it *publique*.'¹¹⁷ It is not entirely clear what exactly he means, but it can be surmised that Nedham is worried about the censure that might be incurred if he tries to stipulate what he thinks Parliament's interest is. So Nedham does not offer a strong statement about the content of the particular interest of Parliament.

What *is* clear is that already in 1645, Nedham was prepared to analyse the conflict in England in terms of various competing interests, Parliament being one of them. He thus began to couch Rohan's international analysis in domestic terms. His final brief editorial in *Britanicus* asks what the city of London's interest is. Despite the fact that Charles has just been taken into custody by Parliamentary forces, Nedham clearly feels it is necessary to shore-up support (and perhaps maintain financial confidence) as he is keen to stress

¹¹⁶ See Worden 1995, p. 318.

¹¹⁷ *Mercurius Britanicus* no. 108 (1-8 February 1645), p. 960.

the city's interest in continuing to support Parliament.¹¹⁸ So, it could be speculated that, had *Mercurius Britannicus* progressed further, Nedham might have gone on to analyse more of the various domestic groups in England.

At some point in 1646 or 1647 Nedham evidently changed allegiance, as he began to produce the pro-Stuart *Mercurius Pragmaticus* in September 1647. I concur with Jonathan Scott's argument that the turn towards royalism in 1647 was a move typical of the Leveller bent to which Nedham subscribed, he being 'one of at least four prominent pro-parliamentary writers and printers who made the transition to royalist allegiance in 1647 and 1648'.¹¹⁹ One strand of logic, among the Levellers, was to seek a Royalist solution to the abuses of power they began to see at the hands of Parliament.

There is at least one occasion in *Pragmaticus* on which Nedham claims that the people of England share Charles's interest, and that this is why Parliament are having to go abroad 'to aggravate their *Charge* against him'.¹²⁰ Here he clearly draws on notion that, if men properly understand their interests, they will act in the wisest possible fashion.

In 1647 Nedham also composed a freestanding work of royalist propaganda entitled *The Case of the Kingdom Stated*, in which he seeks to analyse what is in the proper interest of, in turn, the king, the Presbyterians, the Independents, the city of London, and the Scots. Here, Nedham follows the maxim set up by Rohan, and subsequently developed by Overton, that each individual is best placed to understand and pursue their own proper interests. Nedham simply sees his pamphlet as a compilation of the various interests involved, to be used as the basis of a political settlement. However, unsurprisingly perhaps, he vests more trust in some groups than in others to understand their interests properly.

¹¹⁸ *Mercurius Britannicus* no. 130 (11-18 May 1646), sig. Kkkkkk, 4^v (paginated as 1118, but pagination confused). This application of Rohan's methods of analysis to the domestic sphere was not necessarily one the Duc himself would have endorsed. As Gunn rightly observes, 'he held that England, more than all other states, could flourish only if it preserved national unity' (Gunn 1969, pp. 41-2).

¹¹⁹ Scott 2004a, p. 247.

¹²⁰ *Mercurius Pragmaticus* no. 21 (1-8 February 1648), sig. X, 3^{r-v}.

Consider, for example, Nedham's section on the Presbyterians, in which he seeks to show why their '*Church-way*' should not make them seek to persecute other religious sects.¹²¹ One of his numerous arguments is that persecution often leads to religious sects becoming more fervent, particularly in their belief of the coming of an ultimate redeemer: 'Men under *oppression* (though sometime wise enough) become *mad*, and usually trample down all *Relations* to make way for a *deliverer*, that gives hope of the least remedy, and as the condition of *Being* alters, so all men do varie their *Interests*, and Principles.'¹²² This suggests that it is simply a reality that people's interests are various and changeable, and that policy should reflect this fact.

Throughout the *Case of the Kingdom*, Nedham advocates not monarchy *per se*, but to an allegiance between Charles and the Independent party. However, the way in which this is expressed in the text is dependent upon the particular group Nedham is addressing. When addressing Charles, he argues that 'his onely *Interest* will be, to *close* with that *Party* which gives most *hope* of *Indulgence* to his *Prerogative*, & greatest probability of *favor* to his *Friends*' and denies that this is possible with any party other than the Independents.¹²³ What is perhaps most intriguing in the whole of *The Case of the Kingdom*, is the fact that the interests of the people (conceived as a corporate entity) are given just as much attention. He argues that one very important reason why it is in the interest of Charles to treat with the independents is that the king will be able to show the people that he is largely going to leave them at liberty.¹²⁴ This suggests that not only is the people's interest in liberty from the arbitrary power of the king, but that the individuals that make up the people are really best suited to judge their own interests for themselves. If nothing else, this bolsters the case that Nedham maintained a number of Leveller sympathies despite his defection to the Stuart party. But it is not until much later that Nedham begins to describe this

¹²¹ Nedham 1647, sig. B, 1^r. This reinforces the evidence of Nedham's lingering Leveller sympathies.

¹²² Nedham 1647, sig. B, 1^v.

¹²³ Nedham 1647, sig. A, 2^v.

¹²⁴ Nedham 1647, sig. A, 4^r.

interest the people have in liberty as the crucial interest for the maintenance of the commonwealth.¹²⁵

Although Nedham's main targets throughout his work were the Presbyterians, this is not to say that the Independents were spared his satirical whip and political scorn. In the pages of *Pragmaticus*, Nedham accused Cromwell in particular of pursuing military policies in Ireland purely 'out of respect to his own *Interest*'.¹²⁶ He wrote scornfully of 'King *Cromwell* and his Son Prince *Ireton*'.¹²⁷ So Nedham continues to deploy the vocabulary of 'interests' in his royalist propaganda. However, the necessities of polemic often prevented him from using the vocabulary in a fashion quite as radical as he had in his earlier work. For example, instead of referring to prerogative as the interest of the king, he merely refers to 'the *Royall Interest* of his *Majesty*'.¹²⁸ Thus, the analysis of *The Case of the Kingdom* seems to have disappeared from Nedham's work, and we may speculate that this came as a result of the more polemical style required in his newsbooks.

Following the regicide in January 1649, Nedham was forced into hiding. He continued to publish *Pragmaticus*, but was eventually persuaded to capitulate to the new Commonwealth. In exchange for a light punishment for his previous support for Charles, Nedham was made to write one of the major pieces of propaganda for the new regime. Its title will now be familiar. *The Case of the Commonwealth* appeared in print in 1650, and the second edition carries with it lengthy extracts from Salmasius's *Defensio Regia* and Thomas Hobbes's *De corpore politico*.¹²⁹ Eschewing the language of private interest, Nedham instead stresses the need for all to fall behind the new regime. The second part of the treatise states that he seeks to uncover the 'nature of the *Designes* of

¹²⁵ See chapter 3 below.

¹²⁶ *Mercurius Pragmaticus* no. 1 (28 March – 4 April 1648), sig. A, 4^v.

¹²⁷ *Mercurius Pragmaticus* no. 4 (5-12 October 1647), p. 28.

¹²⁸ *Mercurius Pragmaticus* no. 8 (16-23 May 1648), sig. H, 1^v; no. 9 (23-30 May 1648); sig. I, 1^v.

¹²⁹ Nedham 1650, passim. *De corpore politico* (1650) was the publication of the second half of Hobbes's *The Elements of Law* (1640), which until that point had been circulated only in manuscript. On Nedham's use of Hobbes, see Malcolm 2012, pp. 70-1; Parkin 2007, pp. 78-9; Skinner 2002c, pp. 303-4.

the severall Parties claiming an Interest in this Nation'.¹³⁰ This tagline suggests a more suspicious attitude towards private and particular interests, since the implication is that such interests that are being *claimed* might be false or seditious.

We could attribute Nedham's eschewal of the language of private interests in *The Case of the Commonwealth* to his reading of Hobbes. Nedham states that his reasons for choosing Salmasius and Hobbes are not because he 'esteem[s] their Authorities any whit more Authentick than those ... already alledged', but because they argue in favour of obedience to the *de facto* power.¹³¹ Quoting from chapter 6 of *De corpore politico*, Nedham argues that 'it appears [from what we read in Hobbes] that since there is no other possible way to preserve the wel-being of this Nation; but by a Submission to the present Powers ... we may pay subjection to them in order to our security'.¹³² The particular interests of individual groups thus have to be subordinated in favour of the general peace and security of the new regime.

We could argue that Nedham's reversal on 'interests' in *The Case of the Commonwealth* was based on a reading of the new situation, and the need to unite behind the new regime. But we find a new suspicion of particular interests earlier, when Nedham is still in his royalist mode, in a pamphlet entitled *Good English*, published in 1648.¹³³ The title page states that the advice it gives for the settlement of England is 'drawn from the nature of the *Aims* and *Interests* of the severall *Parties* ingaged', in almost exactly the same way as *The Case of the Kingdom*.¹³⁴ But Nedham also wants to diagnose the 'deficiency and instability' of Parliament, which he identifies as '*private Interest* and *Faction*'.¹³⁵ Clearly, understanding our proper interests is no longer enough in attempting to comprehend

¹³⁰ Nedham 1650, p. 33.

¹³¹ Nedham 1650, p. 103.

¹³² Nedham 1650, p. 108. For the quotation from Hobbes, see Hobbes 1650a, pp. 57-8.

¹³³ For the attribution to Nedham, see Peacey 2004b, p. 180; Worden 1995, p. 334.

¹³⁴ [Nedham] 1648, p. 1.

¹³⁵ [Nedham] 1648, p. 4.

how a political settlement may be reached, and this was a conclusion that would be reinforced by Hobbes himself in *Leviathan*, which was to be published the following year.

The changing role of interests in Hobbes's civil science

I

A number of commentators claim that the various incarnations of Thomas Hobbes's political theory are essentially the same. For example, Richard Tuck argues that in the first two parts of *Leviathan* (and hence in its political theory), Hobbes provides a 'restatement' of his 'psychological and political ideas', which 'were substantially the same as the earlier versions'.¹ In his introduction to *Leviathan*, he suggests that, with the exception of those dealing with religion, 'the differences can almost always be understood as an attempt by Hobbes to give greater clarity to his original ideas'.² As Quentin Skinner has pointed out, this position is 'an orthodoxy well worth challenging'.³ To argue that Hobbes's theory does not change in any substantial way is to deny the impact of the arguments formulated by Hobbes's various opponents over the course of the English Civil Wars. It also ignores any impact that may have been made by Hobbes's engagements and readings during his self-imposed exile in Paris in the same formative years of 1640-51.

In his most recent treatment of Hobbes's composition of *Leviathan* (1651), Noel Malcolm suggests that the text 'stands in very close relation to *De cive*'.⁴ Malcolm argues that 'where the essential lineaments of the political theory are concerned', we can safely conclude that '*Leviathan* is merely a reworking or re-statement of *De cive*'.⁵ However, he also argues that *Leviathan* contains 'a large number of changes to specific arguments',

¹ Tuck 1989, p. 28. See also Baumgold 1988, p. 3; Hampton 1986, p. 5; Plamenatz 1963, vol. 1, p. 118; Raphael 2004, p. 13; Rogow 1988, p. 126; Tuck 1993, pp. 326-9. Baumgold has recently developed her position, describing Hobbes's political writings as a product of 'serial composition': Baumgold 2008, pp. 827-55. Ross Harrison acknowledges that some historians have shown the texts to be different, without applying such variations to his own studies (Harrison 2003, p. 272).

² Tuck 2008, p. xxxviii.

³ Skinner 2002e, p. 80.

⁴ Malcolm 2012, p. 12.

⁵ Malcolm 2012, p. 13.

amongst which he lists Hobbes's theories of representation, authorization, and liberty.⁶ He also mentions what he describes as 'a de-psychologizing of Hobbes's argument' in *Leviathan*, compared to both *De cive* (1642) and *The Elements of Law* (1640).⁷ Malcolm offers some thoughts as to why these specific developments take place.⁸ However, one significant change that Malcolm fails to notice is the addition of the vocabulary of interests between Hobbes's earlier political works and *Leviathan*.

While he is aware of the vocabulary in *The Elements of Law*, it is not until *Leviathan* that the concept takes on a role at the heart of Hobbes's political theory. Because he never provides us with a clear definition, the only way we are able to understand what he means by the term is by studying how he uses it in his texts. As with so many languages and vocabularies in *Leviathan*, we come to the conclusion that Hobbes's appropriation of 'interests' is made in order that the dangerous implications from the pens of other writers of the 1640s might be neutralized.

What follows is a study of Hobbes's vocabulary, and it will therefore largely focus on his English works. As we have seen, one of the central aspects of this new language of interest, as it grows up in sixteenth-century Italy and seventeenth-century France and England, is that while clearly deriving from Latin, it develops in the vernacular as *interesse*, *intérêt*, and *interest*. Malcolm argues that, in composing *Leviathan*, Hobbes clearly had the Latin *De cive* at his desk, and that 'one immediately striking aspect of the verbal differences between *The Elements* and *Leviathan* is that the terminology of the former is often more closely associated with, or derived from, Latin, whereas the latter work makes more of an effort to – so to speak – think for itself in English'.⁹ As we shall see, the use of the vocabulary of interests in Charles Cotton's English translation of *De cive* in 1650

⁶ Malcolm 2012, pp. 15-18.

⁷ Malcolm 2012, p. 19.

⁸ Malcolm 2012, pp. 19-24.

⁹ Malcolm 2012, pp. 101-2.

raises intriguing questions, but does little in explaining Hobbes's own philosophical development.

Hobbes demonstrates that he is aware of the vocabulary of interests as early as 1629, in his translation of Thucydides. In his discussion of the Peloponnesian government in the first book, 'Thucydides speaks in terms which clearly became very important in Hobbes's later criticisms of democracy:¹⁰ 'having equality of vote, and being of severall races, every one will presse his particular interest; whereby nothing is like to bee fully executed'.¹¹ Although these are translations of Thucydides' words, it is significant that Hobbes chooses to use the vocabulary of interests in this particular instance. Hobbes later includes reference to how 'treacherously' men pursue their 'private interests'.¹² As significant as this is however, it does little in helping us to understand Hobbes's own development. If it did, then we would be better able to discern the effect of this element of Hobbes's translation in *The Elements* as well as in *Leviathan*, which is clearly not the case.

Two related questions have to be answered. One is what the vocabulary is doing for Hobbes in *Leviathan* which is absent in *The Elements*. The second is *why* this change takes place. This latter question is the harder to answer, relying heavily on the context of Hobbes's intellectual development. But these questions are inter-related, as part of the explanation for the change must be the fact that the vocabulary does something for Hobbes in the face of changing opposition, which had been lacking in the previous incarnations of his theory. It would seem rather redundant to do this without showing what it achieves in the later text, which is absent in the former.¹³

¹⁰ See Malcolm 2002a, pp. 8-9.

¹¹ Hobbes 1629, pp. 76-7.

¹² Hobbes 1629, p. 205.

¹³ Despite his claim to be pursuing the word 'interest' through its history, Mathiowetz neglects to undertake this form of analysis in a chapter dedicated to Hobbes. See Mathiowetz 2011, ch. 4.

I have no intention here of entering into the well-trodden debate as to the extent to which Hobbes's philosophy tolerates any benevolence in human nature, or whether it is entirely dominated by the concept of rational self-interest. My main reason for eschewing such questions is the fact that Hobbes does not pursue such a vocabulary or such a distinction himself. As numerous studies have shown, there is room in Hobbes's conception of human nature for both self-interest (in its modern understanding) and benevolence.¹⁴ Hobbes himself declines to embellish his own opinion of men's overall selfishness or altruism, by stating in the opening chapter of *The Elements of Law* that, 'I shall leave men but as they are, in doubt, and dispute'.¹⁵ He goes on to state, in chapter 7, that 'there are few things in this world, but ... have a mixture of Good and Evill' and that 'the one cannot be taken without the other'.¹⁶ In the preface to *De cive*, which he adds in 1647, Hobbes repeats this sentiment, and points out that without some central authority to distinguish properly between good and evil, it is necessary for men to be suspicious of each other.¹⁷ It is clear then, that since we, as human beings, are unable to predict the degree of the selfishness of others, it will be necessary to have some form of arbitrating power, and it is on this aspect of his theory that I shall focus in what follows.

The two crucial areas of Hobbes's philosophy that are most affected by the importation of this vocabulary are his theory of counsel and his evaluation of monarchy as a form of government. Both rely upon the theory of persons, which is another innovation in *Leviathan*. The point of the vocabulary in *Leviathan* is to assert the supremacy of the interests of the state, which is identical with the *common* rather than the *particular* goods of the body of the people.

Ultimately, the theory of interests Hobbes presents in his deployment of the term is one which supports the new theory of the state developed in *Leviathan*, and we need

¹⁴ E.g. Gert 2010; Malcolm 2002c, p. 31.

¹⁵ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 11^r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 1.

¹⁶ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 28^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 30.

¹⁷ Hobbes 1983a, p. 80.

therefore to reflect upon the relationship between the interests of the person of the state and the person of the sovereign, which will not always be in accord. Hobbes is also able to contrast the interests of the state (which are congruous with the common good of the people) and the particular interests of individuals within the multitude, and assert the superiority of the former over the latter.

In the following section, I aim to establish how and why the importation of the vocabulary is so important to Hobbes's political theory. Section III will be dedicated to understanding what is unique about interests in Hobbes's schema, and Section IV will show how Hobbes applies this definition to the institutions of the commonwealth, and how it allows him to reflect upon the institutions of his contemporary political universe. This will take us towards an understanding of why Hobbes imports the vocabulary, and in conclusion we will be able to reflect upon what influences may have prompted Hobbes to reach for the vocabulary of interests when he did.

II

The absence of the vocabulary of interests in *The Elements of Law* has perhaps much to do with the fact that Hobbes envisages the earlier recensions of his political theory as refutations of humanist political thought, and perceived the language of interest as an essential part of late humanism, deriving from the works of authors such as Guicciardini. As we have seen, Hobbes's own humanist exercises in translation did include references to interest and his decision to deploy the vocabulary once again (though with greater sophistication) in *Leviathan* might be perceived as part of his re-evaluation of humanism and the virtues of the *studia humanitatis*. While remaining hostile to many aspects of humanist political thought, in his later political theory, Hobbes was keener to embrace

some aspects of Renaissance rhetoric.¹⁸ We might therefore consider the inclusion of interests in his later theory a reflection of this re-invigorated engagement with humanism on Hobbes's part.

It is perhaps as a result of Hobbes's desire to avoid humanist vocabulary, then, that the concept of interest in *The Elements* is left very much undefined. The only appearance of the term is in the Epistle Dedicatory, as part of Hobbes's distinction between mathematical and dogmatic learning (a point which is dropped by the time he comes to write *Leviathan*). He argues that

from the two principall parts of our nature, Reason and Passion, have proceeded two kinds of learning, mathematical and dogmatical. The former is free from controversies and dispute, because it consisteth in comparing figures and motion only; in which things truth and the Interests of men oppose not each other.¹⁹

This quotation could be read in two ways. The following sentence in Hobbes's Epistle speaks of how dogmatic learning 'compareth men, and meddleth with their right and profit', in the same way as it intrudes upon their 'Interests'.²⁰ This supports a traditional conception of interest as a morally ambiguous aim, as it had been used by humanists in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. However, if we see *The Elements* as a refutation, rather than a continuation, of humanist thought, then we might want to say that Hobbes has a different view of interests in mind.

His later discussion of the two types of learning in chapter 13 might also shed some light on this issue. Of the two kinds of men considered 'learned', Hobbes argues, one kind 'proceedeth evidently from humble principles' and 'the other are they that take up maxims from their education, and from the authority of men, or of custom, and take the

¹⁸ Skinner 1996, esp. ch. 9.

¹⁹ BL Eg. MS 2005, f. 3r; BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 2r; BL Harl. MS 4236, f. 2r; Chatsworth, Hobbes MS A. 2. B, f. iii. The original clearly has it as 'Interests', which is mis-transcribed by Tönnies as 'interest', and the same error is made in its publication as *Human Nature* in 1650: Hobbes 1969, p. xv; Hobbes 1650b, sig. A, 2v. See also Skinner 1996, p. 428. The only manuscript exception, in which the word is transcribed as 'Interest', is BL Harl. MS 6858, f. 2r.

²⁰ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 2r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. xv.

habitual discourse of the tongue for ratiocination’.²¹ Interests might therefore be defined merely as received opinions, rather than rational premises, and Hobbes’s use is part of his on-going critique of humanist discourse in the attempt to construct a civil science.

The story is much more complicated by the time we get to *Leviathan*, in which the idea of an interest has been integrated into Hobbes’s civil science as a way of explaining human behaviour. Having just left Hobbes’s discussion of ratiocination in *The Elements*, it is appropriate to turn to his analysis of the relationship between words and reasoning in chapter 5 of *Leviathan*. Men have to be aware in their reasoning not only of the signification of words, but of how what men say may ‘have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker’.²²

This general line of thinking is not absent in earlier versions of Hobbes’s political philosophy. In chapter 5 of *The Elements*, for example, he refers to the ‘divers contextures of speech’, which have to be taken into account when judging signification.²³ Much later, in part 2, chapter 8, there is another passage in which he discusses the causes of rebellion in the commonwealth, one of which is the eloquence and rhetorical arts of those who wish to lead challenges to authority.²⁴ ‘It remaineth’ he argues,

that they be such, as name things not according to their true and generally agreed-upon names; but call right and wrong, good and bad, according to their passions, or according to the authorities such as they admire, as Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and others of the like authority, who have given the names of right and wrong, as the passions have dictated; or have followed the authority of other men, as we do theirs.²⁵

Hobbes immediately follows this passage with a more direct attack on eloquence, arguing that its arts are for those ‘who seek not truth, but belief’, and that they ‘not only derive what they would have to be believed, from somewhat believed already, but also by

²¹ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 52^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 66-7.

²² Hobbes 2012, p. 62.

²³ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 22^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 20-1.

²⁴ Skinner 1996, esp. ch. 7; Whelan 1981, p. 60.

²⁵ BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 131^r-132^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, pp. 175-7.

aggravations and extenuations make good and bad, right and wrong, appear greater or less, according as shall serve their turns'.²⁶ In *De cive*, he repeats this sentiment, arguing that 'eloquence serves to make *Good & Bad, useful & useless, Honourable & dishonourable* appear greater or less than they really are ... just as is profitable to their particular ends'.²⁷ The feeling in both the earlier versions of Hobbes's political thought is that eloquence is dangerous because it appeals to the passions of the speaker, and will allow him or her to manipulate words to serve their particular preferences.

In chapter 11 of *Leviathan* Hobbes repeats this sentiment, but adds a crucial reference to interests, arguing that men and women, 'grown strong, and stubborn, ... appeale from custome to reason, and from reason to custome, as it serves their turn' in much the same way as he had in *The Elements* and *De cive*. Now however, he adds an extra warning, that men will always be prepared to turn their back on custom 'when their interest requires it, ... setting themselves against reason, as oft as reason is against them: Which is the cause, that the doctrine of Right and Wrong, is perpetually disputed, both by the Pen and the Sword'.²⁸ The injection of the vocabulary of interest is crucial: it shows that not only do men's customs, passions and 'turns' cause them to be mistaken about the meanings of words, but their 'interests' will 'require' them to turn against both reason and custom. This change strongly suggests a new and original place for interests beyond the positions already laid out in the previous incarnations of Hobbes's political theory.

A corollary is that, by showing oneself to be free from the bias of private interest, one is able to establish greater authority, or establish a more credible *ethos*. This idea is clear from Hobbes's discussion of miracles in chapter 37, where he contends that the very point of the miraculous occurrences in *Exodus*, committed by God through the hand of

²⁶ BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 132^v-133^r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 177.

²⁷ Hobbes 1983a, pp. 177-8: 'Eloquentiæ autem munus est, *Bonum & malum, utile & inutile, Honestum & inhonestum*, facere apparere maiora vel minora quam reuera sunt, & *Iustum* videri, quod *iniustum* est, prout ad finem dicentis videbitur conducere.' Cf. Hobbes 1998, p. 123.

²⁸ Hobbes 2012, p. 158.

Moses, was to establish the authority of the speaker by showing that they were divinely inspired, rather than motivated by Moses' own particular interest.²⁹ Thus, despite his pessimism, Hobbes remains convinced that it is possible to reach a disinterested agreement, which will be more credible by virtue of not being subject to the whims of interest.

The mixture of pessimism and hope that Hobbes displays in his discussion of the effect of interests on people's understanding of words translates further into the distinction he draws between the 'concord' of men who share an 'interest' and their 'union', in which they submit themselves to the sovereignty of a single will. The emphasis throughout his political theory is on the contention that men's obligation to sovereign authority stems not from any transient motivations such as interests, but from the laws of nature. It would thus be wrong to equate self-preservation with self-interest.³⁰ Similarly, it is wrong to argue, as one commentator does, that 'it is the burden of *Leviathan* to validate' the idea that duties derive from interests 'and to argue ... that whatever is revealed as one's duty is so because it fulfils his or her interests'.³¹ To enter into the Hobbesian covenant on the assumption that your particular interests would be served by doing so would be absurd.³² Once a people are in 'union' they have no choice (no will) to choose their own interests over the interests of the state. Indeed, Hobbes is keen to stress that the sovereign has the right to do severe damage to the particular interests of his subjects in order to maintain the interests of the state.³³

The solution, in chapter 17 of *Leviathan*, is that, although men may be able to unite on the basis of a common interest, such interests can just as easily change and mutate,

²⁹ Hobbes 2012, pp. 684, 686. In *De cive*, Hobbes adds caveats to this claim, which he appears to have dropped in *Leviathan*: Hobbes 1983a, pp. 240-1.

³⁰ Mathiowetz also recognises this: Mathiowetz 2011, p. 137. Cf. Macpherson 1962, p. 1; Mill 1994, p. 302; Owen 2005, pp. 144-5; Tuck 2000, p. 109; Weber 2012, pp. 234-40. Harrison describes self-preservation as a 'special interest' in Hobbes's philosophy (Harrison 2003, pp. 96-7).

³¹ Schochet 1990, pp. 66-7.

³² See also Mathiowetz 2011, pp. 106-14.

³³ Cf. Read 1991, pp. 506-7.

severing the bonds which previously held them together. Although they may be compelled to act together in order to ‘obtain a Victory by their unanimous endeavour against a forraign enemy’, it is almost certain that ‘when either they have no common enemy, or he that by one part is held for an enemy, by another part is held for a friend, they must needs by the difference of their interests dissolve, and fall again into a Warre amongst themselves’.³⁴ Interests are thus inappropriate as the basis of a truly lasting society.

The distinction between ‘concord’ and ‘union’ is already present in *The Elements*:

this consent (or concord) amongst so many men, though it may be made by the fear of this present invader, or by the hope of a present conquest or booty; and endure as long as that action endureth; nevertheless, by the diversity of judgments and passions in so many men contending naturally for honour and advantage one above another: it is impossible, not only that their consent to aid each other against an enemy, but also that the peace should last between themselves, without some mutual and common fear to rule them.³⁵

In *De cive* Hobbes makes a similar reference to the ‘discrepancy’ between ‘private’ and ‘common’ ‘good’ without the union of wills.³⁶ Hobbes’s contemporary translator, Charles Cotton, does speak of ‘private *Interest*’ by contrast with the ‘common good’, but it is unclear where his use of the vocabulary originates.³⁷ Although the English formulation Cotton employs is very close to that deployed by Hobbes in chapter 17 of *Leviathan*, there is no evidence that they are related. But it is still significant that Cotton’s decision to translate the term as ‘Interest’ does alter the view of Hobbes’s theory he wishes to present to his readers in 1650. It is also perhaps testament to the explosion of the use of the language of interests which took place between Hobbes’s composition of *De cive* and Cotton’s translation eight years later.

³⁴ Hobbes 2012, p. 258.

³⁵ BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 76^r-76^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, pp. 101-2.

³⁶ Hobbes, 1983a, p. 132: ‘cum *bonum* sum aliquod *privatum* à *communi* discrepaverit’. Cf. Hobbes 1998, pp. 70-1.

³⁷ Hobbes 1983b, p. 87. On Cotton as translator of *De cive* see Malcolm 2002b, pp. 234-58.

It certainly seems to be one of the issues that Hobbes is forced to consult in his debate concerning liberty and necessity with John Bramhall during his time in Paris. Hobbes finds himself forced to defend the notion of the contract in the face of Bramhall's counter-assertion that 'there was never any time when Mankind was without Governours, Lawes and Societies'. He replies to this claim by restating his conception of the state of nature as a state of war, in which there is no society, 'but onely a temporal League; which every discontented Souldier may depart from when he pleases, as being entred into by each man for his private interest'.³⁸ The distinction here is again between entering into agreements with our private interests in view, and entering into union with a concern for the common goods of peace and security. Again, there remains hope that men will truly be able to enter into a real union based not on interests, but on the common good.³⁹

III

Having established that the addition of interests to *Leviathan* is an important one, we can next look for an account of what Hobbes means when he employs the term. From the foregoing analysis it has emerged that there are three defining qualities of interests: they are held by *individual persons*, they are *mutable and changeable*, and they are *material*, rather than 'transcendent'. This section will deal with these three aspects of Hobbes's implied definition. I shall then develop this analysis by showing how Hobbes applies his definition to his discussions of counsel and monarchy.

³⁸ Hobbes 1656b, p. 139. Although the Marquis of Newcastle commissioned Hobbes to conduct this debate in his presence in 1645, the resulting text was not published until 1654, without Hobbes's permission, as *Libertie and Necessitie* by John Davies, and later, by Hobbes himself, in the form of *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance* (Chappell 1999, pp. ix-x; Malcolm 2002a, p. 18).

³⁹ At least one commentator argues that, even when men are within such a union, the sovereign will have to rely on the coincidence of the common good with the particular interests of at least a proportion of individuals. He needs to be able to 'rely on the general support he may expect from his subjects to coerce recalcitrant individual whose interests are adversely affected by particular acts which he performs': Gauthier 1969, p. 166.

It is in respect of the first of these aspects that Hobbes's theory of persons and representation becomes so important to his conception of interests. His insistence that 'it is the Representer that beareth the Person' of the commonwealth, 'and but one Person',⁴⁰ is crucial in his later argument in favour of monarchy, that 'a Monarch cannot disagree with himselfe, out of envy, or interest'.⁴¹ Hobbes's point is that it is highly undesirable for there to be a 'diversity of Opinions, and Interests' constituting the sovereign power.⁴² For this reason, he insists that, in order for the advice of a counsellor to be sound, it is necessary '*that his Ends, and Interest, be not inconsistent with the Ends and Interest of him he Counselleth*'.⁴³ Hobbes also enjoys the image of counsellors serving the sovereign 'in the place of Memory, and Mentall Discourse', an image which may be alluded to in chapter 13 of *The Elements*, but which is not elaborated on, and certainly not in the language of interests.⁴⁴

This argument is important in Hobbes's assertion of monarchy's superiority as a form of government over aristocracy and democracy. He is emphatic that 'a Monarch may not disagree with himselfe, out of envy, or interest; but an Assembly may; and that to such a height, as may produce a Civill Warre'.⁴⁵ This is developed in the highly evocative passage at the final paragraph of chapter 25, in which Hobbes presents us with the image of the monarch as a tennis player 'carried to the ball ... in a Wheele-barrough, or other frame', in other words subject to the whims and interests of his or her counsellors. When endowed with absolute sovereignty, even if the interests of the monarch are erratic and changeable, they will never contradict each other from one moment to the next, and therefore have a greater capacity for maintaining internal peace.

⁴⁰ Hobbes 2012, p. 248.

⁴¹ Hobbes 2012, p. 290.

⁴² Hobbes 2012, p. 250.

⁴³ Hobbes 2012, p. 404.

⁴⁴ BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 52v-53r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 67.

⁴⁵ Hobbes 2012, p. 290.

The idea that interests can be attributed only to individual and particular persons is made perhaps most strongly in Hobbes's various discussions of the lesser bodies politic that come into being in civil society. He expresses this notion most generally and abstractly in the statement he makes at the opening of chapter 22 of *Leviathan*: 'By SYSTEMES; I understand any numbers of men joyned in one Interest, or one Businesse.'⁴⁶ The equivalent passage from *The Elements* suggests a much tamer meaning:

As this union into a city or body politic, is instituted with common power over all the particular persons, or members thereof, to the common good of them all; so also may there be amongst a multitude of those members, instituted a subordinate union of certaine men, for certaine common actions to be done by those men for some common benefitt of theirs or of the whole city.⁴⁷

Hobbes hereby relates us back to his signal distinction between 'concord' and 'union', and he goes on to circumscribe the powers of such institutions, arguing that 'these subordinate bodyes politique are usually called CORPORATIONS And their power such over the particulars of their own society, as the whole city whereof they are members have allowed them'.⁴⁸

Hobbes expresses almost exactly this sentiment in chapter 19 of *Leviathan*, when he argues that 'where there is already erected a Sovereign Power, there can be no other Representative of the same people, but onely to certain particular ends, by the Sovereign limited'.⁴⁹ But a crucial difference between Hobbes's two accounts is that the legitimacy of the lesser bodies politic in *The Elements* originates in the multitudinous people, rather than the sovereign representative.⁵⁰ Once again, his new ideas about persons and authors are crucial, as Hobbes argues in *Leviathan* that 'the act of him that recedes not from the Letters of the Sovereign, is the act of the Sovereign, and therefore every member of the

⁴⁶ Hobbes 2012, p. 348.

⁴⁷ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 78^r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 104.

⁴⁸ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 78^{r-v}. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 104.

⁴⁹ Hobbes 2012, p. 286.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mathiowetz 2011, p. 120.

Body is Author of it'.⁵¹ Conversely, it is important that those members of these lesser bodies politic who disagree with its policy should ensure that their 'dissent ... be Registered', in order that any potentially criminal activity is not attributable to them.⁵² Indeed, the potentiality of these lesser bodies politic to corrupt the state is made clear in chapter 29, in which they are likened to 'wormes in the entrayles of a naturall man'.⁵³ That Hobbes does not include such a consideration in the parallel discussion in *The Elements* is indicative of his shifting concerns.⁵⁴

The second, and perhaps most important, aspect of Hobbes's concept is that interests are endlessly mutable, as appears most clearly in the Review and Conclusion of *Leviathan*. Here, Hobbes contrasts eloquence and reason, and argues that the former is grounded upon 'Opinions already received, true, or false; and upon the Passions and Interests of men, which are different, and mutable'.⁵⁵ By claiming that the interests of men are 'different', Hobbes establishes what we have already concluded: that individuals have particular interests, which coincide with each other only by chance. By claiming that the interests of men are 'mutable', Hobbes is arguing that our interests can change. This argument is supported by his comment later in the Review and Conclusion, in which he expresses pessimism that his ideas, even if accepted at the present moment, will not be accepted so easily in the future. 'It is naturall for men, at one and the same time', he argues, 'both to proceed in reading, and to lose their attention, in the search of objections to that they had read before: Of which, in a time wherein the interests of men are changed ... there cannot choose but be very many'.⁵⁶ Here, Hobbes is not merely making a comment on the nature of the changes that have taken place since the regicide of

⁵¹ Hobbes 2012, p. 352.

⁵² Hobbes 2012, p. 356.

⁵³ Hobbes 2012, p. 516.

⁵⁴ BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 125^r-133^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, pp. 168-78.

⁵⁵ Hobbes 2012, p. 1132.

⁵⁶ Hobbes 2012, p. 1139.

Charles I, but also on the inability of reason to compete with the power of rhetoric and to adapt to man's mutating interests.⁵⁷

The fact that interests are changeable and mutable in contrast to passions is particularly significant in the development which takes place between *The Elements* and *Leviathan*. If we were to think of interests simply as a form of higher passion, as Albert Hirschman suggests, it might be argued that there is no significance in the shift of vocabulary.⁵⁸ But if we conclude that passions are fixed attributes of human behaviour, while interests are the changeable *objects* of affection, desire and envy, then the development becomes much more profound.

Passions are fixed and static in our nature in two senses. The first is that they are permanent; the only point at which we are not passionate is when we are dead. As one commentator has put it, passions are, for Hobbes, 'short-term satisfaction allied to lifelong insatiability'.⁵⁹ This definition of passion is, in turn, very important in Hobbes's definition of the will, and his assertion that the will is only ever the last appetite.⁶⁰ Furthermore, an understanding of such a connection is fundamental for understanding his theory of the freedom of the will and the liberty of the subject.⁶¹ The other sense in which passions are fixed is that Hobbes names them and lists them, giving them particular effects and characteristics, something he does not provide for interests for the very reason that they are less predictable and more transient.⁶²

For Hobbes, there are two sources of passions: one is birth, the other experience.⁶³ In both ways, passions are appetites and aversions that we obtain and do not lose unless we forget about them, or suppress them either by employing another passion or appealing to

⁵⁷ Cf. Malcolm 2012, p. 74; Worden 2007, pp. 104-5.

⁵⁸ Hirschman 1997, pt 1.

⁵⁹ James 1997, pp. 131-2.

⁶⁰ Hobbes 2012, p. 90.

⁶¹ Skinner 2008, pp. 25-6.

⁶² See: BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 32^r-40^r; BL Harl. MS 6083, f. 177^{r-v}; Hobbes 2012, pp. 78-96. On the contrast between these accounts in *The Elements* and *Leviathan*, see Pacchi 1987, pp. 111-19.

⁶³ Hobbes 2012, p. 80.

our reason. Passions are thus able to change and fluctuate in relation both to each other and to reason, but they are otherwise predictable. Passions are so predictable, in fact, that Hobbes feels comfortable in stating that it is ‘the Passions that encline men to Peace’, and in particular ‘Fear of Death’ and the hope of gaining ‘commodious living’, with no mention of interests.⁶⁴ By contrast, interests are liable to change and mutate in ways we are unable to anticipate.⁶⁵ Thus, by introducing the vocabulary of interests into *Leviathan*, Hobbes is making a much stronger and more dramatic statement about the competitiveness and unpredictability of human nature.

The changeability of our interests is a feature to which Henri de Rohan had already drawn attention in the preface to *On the Interest of the Princes and States of Christendom* (1638), in which he argues that as interest ‘always aims at the increase or, at the least, the conservation, so also to achieve this, it must vary according to the times’.⁶⁶ It could be argued that, in a sense, Rohan adheres to a very traditional Machiavellian notion that civic survival relies on the ability of the virtuous individual to adapt to the whims of *fortuna*. Rohan’s other point, however, is that we do not have to reflect very much on history to understand our interests. As he puts it, ‘it is not necessary to ascend very high, but only to take the standing of the present affairs’, a claim clearly emulated in Hobbes’s definition.⁶⁷ But in the second part of his treatise Rohan turns to the historical reasons why men have so consistently mistaken their interests.⁶⁸ The possibility that men might mistake what is in their interest is not dwelt on by Hobbes, and we should not associate him with the idea of men having *true* or *proper* interests in the manner of Rohan or

⁶⁴ Hobbes 2012, p. 196.

⁶⁵ Cf. Mansbridge 1990, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Rohan 1995, p. 161: ‘Et comme il a toujours pour but l’accroissement ou, pour le moins, la conservation, aussi pour parvenir faut-il qu’il se change selon le temps.’ Cf. Rohan 1640, pp. 1-2. In referring to ‘conservation’ here, Hunt annexes the words ‘of the State’, which are absent (though perhaps implied) in Rohan’s original text.

⁶⁷ Rohan 1995, p. 161: ‘il n’est point besoin de remonter fort haut, mais seulement de prendre sur le pied des affaires présentes’. Cf. Rohan 1640, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Rohan 1995, p. 187. Cf. Rohan 1640, pp. 38-9.

Nedham.⁶⁹ This is also true of the kind of allegedly ‘permanent interests’ later to be discussed by figures such as David Hume and John Stuart Mill.⁷⁰

There can be no doubt that when Hobbes mentions interest it is often in the same breath as ‘Opinion’.⁷¹ But Hobbes never articulates how we might be mistaken in our opinion of what is in our interests, nor does he explain how we might go about remedying such confusions.⁷² It is surely the case that, for Hobbes, when we act out of our particular interests, we are acting purely on opinion. When we stop acting according to what our opinion tells us is in our interests, we begin to act according to right reason, and according to the laws of nature. There is evidence that later ‘Hobbesian’ writers do not draw such a distinction between opinion and right reason in regard to interests. Malcolm has associated Hobbes’s influence with the development of the idea of *amour-propre éclairé* – which he translates as ‘enlightened self-interest’ – as it is used by French thinkers such as Pierre-Sylvain Regis and Pierre Nicole.⁷³ But it has not been shown that Hobbes himself had any notion of ‘enlightened self-interest’.⁷⁴

Thus we return to the previous question of whether it is out of a concern for our particular interests that we obey the sovereign power. It clearly is not out of a concern for our interests that we obey, but out of a concern for the interest of the state and the common good. But, significantly, Hobbes never suggests that these interests are more rational and less arbitrary simply because they are conceived by the sovereign authority. In other words, our obligation is based upon reason (and in this case our reason telling us that the sovereign is the bearer of our rights), while the particular commands we obey

⁶⁹ We can question the conclusion of one commentator, that Hobbes intends *Leviathan* as a piece of advice to sovereign powers to follow their ‘true’ interests: Mara 1988, p. 401. But, on Hobbes’s potential conception of himself as counsellor to his pupil, the young Prince Charles and, subsequently, to the Commonwealth, see Malcolm 2012, pp. 54-7, 81.

⁷⁰ Hume 1987, p. 38; Mill 1991, p. 15.

⁷¹ Hobbes 2012, pp. 250, 1132 are the most obvious examples.

⁷² Cf. Gert 2010, pp. 37-8; Holmes 1995, p. 81.

⁷³ Malcolm 2002d, pp. 501-2, 509-10.

⁷⁴ Cf. Reik 1977, p. 97.

remain based on opinion, albeit the opinion of the representative of the state. For Hobbes, it is not so much that men are capable of having a false notion of what is in their interests. Rather, they are mistaken in thinking that their particular interests are to be preferred over other commodities of life such as peace, and over the interests of the state.

Here, it is clear that Hobbes owes a great debt to the Neostoic philosophers of the late sixteenth century, and in particular Justus Lipsius, one of the only contemporary philosophers whom Hobbes sees fit to acknowledge overtly in his early writings.⁷⁵ In chapter 6 of *De constantia* of 1584, Lipsius quotes his friend, Langius, who argues ‘that inconstancy is the companion of Opinion’, whereas ‘Constancy is a mate always matched with Reason’.⁷⁶ Like Hobbes, Lipsius promotes the ideal of peace over all other considerations, and criticises those who perceive principles of political obligation to derive from nature. Langius sets the innocent character of Lipsius straight when he argues that ‘the band whereby we are linked ... to our country is but external and accidental, in that it is easily broken by one inordinate lust’.⁷⁷ We are reminded of Hobbes’s image of people turning against custom in favour of their interests, and of falling back into war when their interests diverge.⁷⁸

These reflections are grounded, in Hobbes’s case, on his pessimism about man’s ability to live in peace. Like Lipsius, however, Hobbes is at the same time arguing that the avoidance of those aspects of our lives which are changeable and mutable will make us happier and more contented. They envisage this outcome in very different ways. Hobbes’s conception is more external, whereas Lipsius’s is more spiritual; his concern is to show that external evils are products of our internal imperfections. It is perhaps this

⁷⁵ Hobbes 1629, sig. A(b), 1^r.

⁷⁶ Lipsius 2006, p. 40.

⁷⁷ Lipsius 2006, p. 51.

⁷⁸ See above. On references to the dangers of rhetorical redescription in Lipsius’ *Politikes*, see Skinner 1996, pp. 176-7. On Hobbes and Lipsius’ patriotism, see Burchell 1999, pp. 522-3.

internalisation which makes Lipsius's philosophy less suited to the vocabulary of interests when compared with Hobbes's civil science. Still, the ideal of constancy is centrally important to both philosophers, and for Hobbes as a particular way of appealing against the problem of the changeability of our interests. For Hobbes, the state, rather than the predictability of our passions and interests, will be the agent of this constancy and permanence.⁷⁹

The third important feature of Hobbes's conception of interests is that they are essentially material in nature, and not 'transcendent'. Some modern commentators are keen to attribute to Hobbes the notion that there are certain 'ideals' which are not only beneficial to us as human beings, but which might be described as interests.⁸⁰ As I established at the beginning of this chapter, it is not wrong to suggest that Hobbes saw virtues (and not merely passions) as pushing us towards things that are to our benefit.⁸¹ But these scholars neglect to follow Hobbes's vocabulary closely enough. It is clear, from the way in which he uses the terminology of interests in *Leviathan*, that the kind of rewards we gain from acting morally are not the same as fulfilling our interest, something we can already deduce from the fact that they are so unpredictable and liable to change with our every whim.

A crucial example of this point about interests, for Hobbes, is afforded by the pretensions of the clergy and the base and material interests which lie beneath their rhetoric. In chapter 12 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes refers to the 'signes of private interest' he associates with the 'profit' and 'Fees' of the 'unpleasing Priests' who hold 'private Masses'. The fact that they are 'enough to mortifie the most lively Faith' shows clearly that such instances of private interest are held by Hobbes to be anathema to spirituality

⁷⁹ Cf. Hirschman 1997, pp. 48-56.

⁸⁰ Lloyd 1992; Lloyd 2009.

⁸¹ This is clear particularly in the discussion of the laws of nature proceeding from the first (to pursue peace) and second (honouring contracts): Hobbes 2012, ch. 15.

and conviction.⁸² Hobbes's conception of religion was not entirely materialistic, and allowed him to separate interests based on their materiality. In his objection to Descartes's *Third Meditation*, published in Latin in 1647, Hobbes describes angels as 'invisible and immaterial', arguing that it is impossible even to have an idea of beings divine, and a recent commentator on Hobbes's religious views has suggested that in this respect, 'it is wrong to think of Hobbes as a "materialist"'.⁸³

This contention is reinforced by Hobbes's discussion of miracles in chapter 37, where he insists that 'the works of God in Egypt, by the hand of Moses, were properly Miracles; because they were done with intention to make the people of Israel beleieve, that Moses came unto them, not out of any design of his owne interest, but as sent from God'.⁸⁴ The suggestion is that Moses' credibility depends on the fact that there are no interests at work among his motives. Later in the same chapter, Hobbes argues that 'such is the ignorance, and aptitude to error generally of all men, but especially of them that have not much knowledge of naturall causes, and of the nature, and interests of men; as by innumerable and easie tricks to be abused'.⁸⁵ In other words, men can easily be led astray from the path of religion by those who manipulate them for their own interest (and given the negative connotations, Hobbes is unlikely to mean interest in salvation). Finally, in chapter 47, he points to the 'pleasure and Interest' of the Pope as though they are the same as any other 'forraign Prince'.⁸⁶ The use of the vocabulary here is essentially traditional, but clearly designates interests as being opposed to spiritual goods and allied with material ones.

⁸² Hobbes 2012, p. 186.

⁸³ Hobbes 1996, p. 80. On Hobbes and Descartes, see also Tuck 1988, pp. 39-40; Cromartie 2008, p. 879.

⁸⁴ Hobbes 2012, pp. 684, 686. Cf. Hobbes 1983a, p. 240.

⁸⁵ Hobbes 2012, p. 692. The word is mistranscribed in the 'Bear' edition of *Leviathan* as 'intrests [sic]'. We must infer that Malcolm does not consider this to be 'a substantive textual variant', and is therefore omitted from his edition (on the distinction between 'substantive' and 'accidental' variants, see Malcolm 2012, pp. 312-13).

⁸⁶ Hobbes 2012, p. 1108. Also of interest in this respect is: Hobbes 1656b, p. 212.

Such statements should be seen in the context of Hobbes's increasingly vehement criticism of the Catholic Church and the clergy in general. Indeed, he cites the hostility of the Catholic courtiers attending the Queen Mother in Paris as one of his chief reasons for returning to England early in 1652.⁸⁷ A connected theme in Hobbes's work is the desire to render denominational hostilities insignificant to politics by indicating as much as possible the agreement which exists between the various Christian sects. Although this had been a theme of his work since *The Elements*, it is particularly strong in *Leviathan*, and must have some connection with his encounter with William Davenant while in Paris. Consider a verse from Davenant's poem, *Gondibert*, to which Hobbes responded in 1650:

For *Prayer* the Ocean is, where diversly
Men steer their course, each to a severall Coast;
Where all our Interests so discordant be,
That half beg winds by which the rest are lost.⁸⁸

As well as pointing out the destructive powers of particular interests against the common good, the emphasis here seems to be on the contrast between the ethereal ocean of spirituality and the messy selfishness of the land. Earlier in his *Discourse*, Davenant emphasises the utopian unity of Christianity before its split into factions and distinct interests.⁸⁹ Similarly, Hobbes sees the competing claims about salvation offered by denominational sects not as ideals at all, but as various mistakes about a divine will which cannot possibly be perceived. Thus it becomes increasingly clear why he insists so strongly on the subjugation of organised religion to the rule of the civil sovereign.⁹⁰

I have shown that interests for Hobbes are properties of individuals (rather than groups), that they are changeable and mutable (and cannot be categorised according to which are real and which are false), and that they are necessarily material. All of these

⁸⁷ Malcolm 2002a, pp. 20-1; Skinner 2002f, pp. 22-3. On the various attempts to convert Hobbes to Catholicism during his time in Paris, see Malcolm 2012, pp. 44-5.

⁸⁸ Davenant 1650, p. 71.

⁸⁹ Davenant 1650, p. 21.

⁹⁰ Hobbes 2012, pp. 850-66.

defining characteristics reveal interests as potential dangers to the stable polity. There are a number of areas in which men's material interests will clash with that of the state, and Hobbes is particularly concerned about the possibility that there might be a discrepancy between the interest of the sovereign authority – or of its counsellors – and the common good. It is to these problems that we next need to turn.

IV

Now that we have established a Hobbesian definition of interests, we can proceed to study the way in which the vocabulary is used to evaluate monarchy as a form of government, and the related theme of the nature of counsel and what constitutes good advice. Finally, this definition can be shown to be decisive in Hobbes's changing evaluation of Parliament as an assembly of counsellors.

In regard to the conduct of the sovereign power, we should perhaps begin with Hobbes's assumption that whoever is holder of the sovereign power will pursue their own interests, regardless of the effect it will have on their subjects. That this is unwise when it neglects any degree of well-being on the part of the subject is equally potent in Hobbes's reasoning. Indeed, these two points are juxtaposed in chapter 19 of *Leviathan*:

whosever beareth the Person of the people, or is one of the Assembly that bears it, beareth also his own naturall Person. And though he be carefull in his politique Person to procure the common interest; yet he is more, or no lesse carefull to procure the private good of himselfe, his family, kindred, and friends; and for the most part, if the publique interest chance to crosse the private, he prefers the private: for the Passions of men, are commonly more potent than their Reason.⁹¹

Having delivered this dishearteningly pessimistic diagnosis, Hobbes offers us some hope, in that 'where the publique and private interest are most closely united, there is the

⁹¹ Hobbes 2012, p. 288.

publique most advanced’ and that ‘in Monarchy, the private interest is the same with the publique’.⁹²

In *The Elements*, Hobbes had argued very differently in favour of monarchy, claiming that there is less passion in a monarchy than in an aristocracy (democracy having been dismissed as simply an aristocracy of orators).⁹³ One ‘inconvenience of monarchy’, Hobbes argues, is that a monarch is likely to deprive his subjects of their goods and possessions, above that which is ‘necessary for the defence of the commonwealth’. But he adds that this practice is ‘greater in an aristocracy, and also more likely to come to pass’.⁹⁴ The crucial difference here is that in *Leviathan* Hobbes abandons the claim that monarchs are less susceptible to the passions, and argues that they are rather more able (by virtue of being one person) to associate their own interests with those of the public.

A number of commentators have argued that Hobbes sees the interests of the people and the interests of the monarch as identical.⁹⁵ This cannot be the case, given what we have already established about the nature of his conception of interests. Hobbes is more likely to mean that the sovereign will always have an interest in the people being materially satisfied, and this is reflected in his later reference to this theme in his *Dialogue on the Common Laws* (1681), where he argues that ‘it concerns them [monarchs] in their own interest to make such Laws as the people can endure, and keep them without impatience, and live in strength and courage to defend their King and countrey’.⁹⁶ The emphasis here on what the people are prepared to endure, rather than their particular interests, suggests that this has much to do with Hobbes’s consistent appeal to political

⁹² Hobbes 2012, p. 288.

⁹³ BL Harl. MS 4235, ff. 103^v-104^r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, pp. 140-1. See also Skinner 2008, pp. 11-13.

⁹⁴ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 105^r. Cf. Hobbes 1969, p. 142.

⁹⁵ Burgess 2009, p. 312; Force 2003, p. 142; Gunn 1969, p. 66; Hirschman 1997, p. 98; Okin 1982, pp. 50-5. One commentator argues that this is Hobbes’s claim in the abstract, while in *Behemoth* recognises to be historically implausible: Holmes 1995, p. 93.

⁹⁶ Hobbes 2005, p. 144. The *Dialogue* was not published until 1681, despite being composed in the 1660s. See Cromartie 2005, pp. xiv-xix.

prudence, and does not refer to any necessary identification between the common interest and the private interest of the monarch.

The public interest in *Leviathan* is a complex idea, as it cannot refer to a straightforward aggregate of the particular interests of the people. Without union, the people remain a multitude, and the idea of a public can only exist once the multitudinous people have formed themselves into a commonwealth with a unified representative. For this reason it is mistaken to argue that to carry out the duty of the sovereign' the Hobbesian ruler 'has to desert the persona of an individual and identify with the interests of his subjects'.⁹⁷ Hobbes is, on the contrary, pushing the sovereign away from serving the particular interests of the people, and towards serving the interests of the unitary person of the state. The idea of a public interest can only be the idea of the interest of the unified body created, i.e. the *state*, which is what Hobbes is referring to in his claim that 'where the publique and private interest are most closely united, there is the publique most advanced'.⁹⁸ Here Hobbes is not talking about the interest of the sovereign and the interests of the people, but about the interests of the sovereign and the interest of the fictional person of the state.⁹⁹

One commentator has suggested that not only does Hobbes argue 'repeatedly that the interests of the sovereign and the people are identical', but that this leaves no room for Parliament as 'an invaluable remedial influence that could supplement the monarch's personal reserves of reason', as he was to embrace it in the writing of his final decades.¹⁰⁰ This ignores the role Hobbes describes for counsellors in *Leviathan*, and misinterprets his warnings about consultative assemblies. He is always keen to insist that parliaments are

⁹⁷ Sorell 2004, p. 184.

⁹⁸ Hobbes 2012, p. 288.

⁹⁹ Cf. Mathiowetz 2011, pp. 125-7. For discussion of the Hobbesian conception of representation, the authorisation of the sovereign representative, and of the state as a fictional person, see Baumgold 1988, pp. 36-55; Gauthier 1969, pp. 120-77; Pitkin 1967, pp. 14-37; Runciman 2000, pp. 268-78; Runciman 2003, pp. 34-5; Skinner 2007, pp. 157-80; Skinner 2009, pp. 343-8.

¹⁰⁰ Okin 1982, pp. 51, 58-9.

institutions which exist only by virtue of being summoned by the monarch for a particular purpose.¹⁰¹ But this is not to deny that counsellors have a place in the scheme of *Leviathan*, and this is the theme we next need to investigate.

Before addressing counsel in itself, Hobbes is forced to reflect upon something that many humanist writers of the sixteenth century had considered: the education of an infant monarch. Chapter 19 of *Leviathan* argues that ‘the Tuition shall be in him, that hath by Nature most interest in the preservation of the Authority of the Infant’.¹⁰² This establishes the mood of Hobbes’s entire discussion of the relationship between counsellor and sovereign. It is made abundantly clear that, by contrast with many statements of good counsel made by Renaissance humanists, the object of good counsel is not the maintenance of the sovereign’s religious commitments or education, but his *authority*, and it is for this reason, as we have already established, that Hobbes insists that ‘we may set down for the first condition of a good Counsellour, *That his Ends, and Interest, be not inconsistent with the Ends and Interest of him he Counselleth*’.¹⁰³

The concern Hobbes expresses about counsel in *Leviathan* is much more urgent than in *The Elements*. Chapter 25 of *Leviathan* contains a section on ‘exhortation’ and ‘dehortation’, both of which are ‘directed to the Good of him that giveth Counsell, not of him that asketh it, which is contrary to the duty of a Counsellour’.¹⁰⁴ He warns that ‘they that Exhort and Dehort, where they are required to give Counsell, are corrupt Counsellours, and as it were bribed by their own interest’.¹⁰⁵ In chapter 17 of *The Elements* Hobbes argues against pressing counsel too forcefully, and acknowledges that there are selfish aspects to the giving of advice. It is ‘a law of nature’ he argues, ‘*That no man obtrude to press his advice or counsell to any man that declareth himself unwilling to hear the same*. For seeing

¹⁰¹ Hobbes 2012, p. 286.

¹⁰² Hobbes 2012, p. 292.

¹⁰³ Hobbes 2012, p. 404.

¹⁰⁴ Hobbes 2012, p. 402.

¹⁰⁵ Hobbes 2012, p. 402.

a man taketh counsel concerning what is good or hurt to himself only, and not of his counsellor; and that counsel is a voluntary action, and therefore tendeth also the good of the counsellor: there may often be just cause to suspect the counsellor.¹⁰⁶ The idea of having a ‘good’ in mind contrary to that of the one taking advice does not sound as potentially dangerous or destructive as an ‘interest’.

As has already been stressed, the emphasis in *Leviathan* is on the unified person of the people, and the relation of counsel to that person. Thus, we should return to the various bodily metaphors which are used to describe counsellors in *Leviathan*. As we have already seen, there are essentially two metaphors used for counsel: the idea of counsellors as the ‘members’ of the body of the sovereign,¹⁰⁷ and the idea of counsel serving the sovereign ‘in the place of Memory, and Mentall Discourse’.¹⁰⁸ The first is the more controversial, as it comes into conflict with a claim Hobbes makes in the earlier chapter dealing with public ministers, in which he likens such officials to ‘the Nerves, and Tendons that move the severall limbs of a body naturall’, as ‘the organs of Voice’, of ‘the Hands’, and, ‘as it were the publique Eare’.¹⁰⁹ Because these are all considered to be extensions of the person of the state and to function as parts of the body of the commonwealth, substituted in for the members of the sovereign authority, Hobbes considers them to be ‘Publique Persons’. Like Counsellors, he also expects good public ministers to conform to the interest of the sovereign, arguing that they should ‘take for Instruction that which Reason dictates to be most conducing to his [their] Sovereigns interest’.¹¹⁰ But he appears less worried that they will be corrupted by their own interests than counsellors.

Hobbes defines a public minister as ‘he, that by the Sovereign ... is employed in any affaires, with Authority to represent in that employment, the Person of the Common-

¹⁰⁶ BL Harl. MS 4235, f. 69^v. Cf. Hobbes 1969, pp. 91-2.

¹⁰⁷ Hobbes 2012, p. 546.

¹⁰⁸ Hobbes 2012, p. 404.

¹⁰⁹ Hobbes 2012, pp. 378, 380, 382.

¹¹⁰ Hobbes 2012, p. 424.

wealth'.¹¹¹ Indeed, all these bodily metaphors (tendons, voice, hands, ears) are outward and physical extensions of the sovereignty, all directed in their actions by the will of the sovereign, which is not determined by any of those particular parts of the body. Furthermore, we are told at the end of this chapter that a counsellor of the sovereign does not fall into this category, and Hobbes's reason for this is intriguing. He argues that when counsel is given, 'the Advice is addressed to the Sovereign only, whose person cannot in his own presence, be represented to him, by another'.¹¹² (Hobbes is keen to stress that this must only count for a small number of counsellors, as most have at least some other role of 'immediate Administration'.)¹¹³

We should bear this in mind when Hobbes argues in chapter 30 that 'there is no choyce of Counsell, neither in a Democracy, nor Aristocracy', as 'the persons Counselling are members of the person Counsell'd'. This, Hobbes claims, makes counsel only 'proper to Monarchy'. But, as we have already seen, an emphasis is put on the extent to which the interests of the counsellor conform to those of the monarch. Indeed, Hobbes argues that not only the least dangerous counsellors, but 'the most able Counsellours, are they that have least hope of benefit by giving evill Counsell, and most knowledge of those things that conduce to the Peace, and Defence of the Commonwealth'.¹¹⁴ Finally, he denies that anyone has the 'Right' to give counsel simply by virtue of their birth, which serves as one of his many attacks on the pretensions of the aristocracy.¹¹⁵ In chapter 30, Hobbes goes on to argue:

The best Counsell, in those things that concern not other Nations, but onely the ease, and benefit the Subjects may enjoy, by Lawes that look onely inward, is to be taken from the generall informations, and complaints of the people of each Province, who are best acquainted with their own wants, and ought therefore, when they demand nothing in derogation of the essentiall Rights of Sovereignty, to

¹¹¹ Hobbes 2012, p. 376.

¹¹² Hobbes 2012, p. 384.

¹¹³ Hobbes 2012, p. 384.

¹¹⁴ Hobbes 2012, p. 546.

¹¹⁵ Hobbes 2012, pp. 546, 548.

be diligently taken notice of. For without those Essentiall Rights, (as I have often before said,) the Common-wealth cannot at all subsist.¹¹⁶

This demonstrates that Hobbes thought it desirable that the sovereign be made familiar with the ‘wants’ of the multitude, and that this information came best from those who were aware of local issues. This in some ways reflects the need for an institution akin to Parliament.

However, on a number of occasions Hobbes is adamant that counsel of this variety must not be allowed to take place in the form of an assembly. In chapter 25 he relates this conviction directly to the attack on eloquence I have already discussed. He argues that ‘in an Assembly of many, there cannot choose but be some whose interests are contrary to that of the Publique’ and that these interests are dangerous, as ‘these their Interests make passionate, and Passion eloquent, and Eloquence drawes others into the same advice’.¹¹⁷ In the following paragraph he describes the paralysis of the political body ‘which cannot move but by the plurality of consenting opinions’ and ‘inconcurrent judgments’, which is ‘retarded’ by the force of competing interests.¹¹⁸

The corruptibility of counsel given in an assembly is such that Hobbes insists that the best counsel is ‘when they give every one his Advice, and the reasons of it apart’, in which state ‘they have more time’ and because ‘they are lesse subject to be carried away to contradiction, through Envy, Emulation, or other Passions arising from the difference of opinion’.¹¹⁹ Hobbes is keen to emphasise that the powers of exhortation and dehortation are most dangerously deployed when counsellors are assembled.

As has already been suggested, another weakness of assembled counsellors is, for Hobbes, that they can become reliant on persuading their fellow counsellors to join them

¹¹⁶ Hobbes 2012, p. 548.

¹¹⁷ Hobbes 2012, p. 408. Again, the ‘Bear’ edition contains a minor variant here, rendering ‘choose’ as ‘chuse’.

¹¹⁸ Hobbes 2012, p. 412.

¹¹⁹ Hobbes 2012, p. 548.

in advice, and that this comes to undermine the interest of the person counselled. Towards the end of chapter 22 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes condemns what he describes as ‘secret cabals’, which are ‘a Faction, or Conspiracy unlawfull, ... being a fraudulent seducing of the Assembly for their particular interest’. This reinforces what he has maintained about interests throughout. But he immediately follows this with another reference to interests which is by no means as straightforward:

If he, whose private interest is to be debated, and judged in the Assembly, make as many friends as he can; in him it is no Injustice; because in this case he is no part of the Assembly. And though he hire such friends with mony, (unlesse there be an expresse Law against it,) yet it is not Injustice. For sometimes ... Justice cannot be had without mony.¹²⁰

It is telling that Hobbes drops this rather outrageous statement in the Latin version of *Leviathan* in 1668.¹²¹ But perhaps the nature of this claim is simply part of the terrifying reality Hobbes wishes us to consider of a world ruled by assemblies of men all vying to promote their particular interests.

V

We next need to ask why Hobbes takes up this particular vocabulary to drive home the distinction between particular interests and the common good. Most historians agree that a major contributing factor to the spread of the concept of interests was the propagation of the theory of ‘reason of state’, and this was clearly formative in Hobbes’s deployment of the vocabulary. For these purposes, it is profitable to draw a distinction between the Italian and French manifestations of this trend. This is particularly important when we turn to Hobbes’s intellectual development. We can be fairly certain Hobbes was fully aware and immersed in *ragion di stato* literature of the sixteenth century from as early as the 1610s. The catalogue of the Hardwick library he compiled by 1628 tells us that he

¹²⁰ Hobbes 2012, p. 372.

¹²¹ Hobbes 2012, p. 373. I take the Latin version to have been written after the English (see Malcolm 2012, pp. 168-75).

was acquainted with the writings of (among others) Giovanni Botero, Francesco Guicciardini, René de Lucinge (a Frenchman, but much indebted to Botero) and, of course, Niccolò Machiavelli.¹²² We already know that Guicciardini, Botero and Lucinge all used the vocabulary of interests, even if Machiavelli did not. But the fact that Hobbes had probably read them by 1628 does little to help us understand the role of interests in *Leviathan* for obvious reasons. It is more likely that Hobbes was stimulated by the French reception of reason of state theory – *raison d'état* – and in particular, that of Philippe de Béthune, Henri de Rohan, and Jean de Silhon. There is no evidence that Hobbes had read them before his time in Paris, but it is highly likely he would have encountered them in his self-imposed exile there of 1640-51.¹²³

As well as this influence, Hobbes's decision to make the concept of interest central to *Leviathan* must have something to do with the way in which the language was being used by contemporaries writing on both the royalist and parliamentary side during the Civil War. But it is not a simple case of Hobbes picking one of these sides. Rather, he has a conception of interests which resolves some of the issues left open by those who used the vocabulary during the 1640s. Here we can reflect on three different uses of the idea of an interest against which to contrast Hobbes's employment of the term. One is the idea of England's constitution as a mixed monarchy composed of complementary particular interests. Another is the need to convince certain groups in civil society that it is in their interests to employ certain political tactics. Finally, we are forced to reflect upon the claim that the purpose of civil government is to fulfil the interests of the people.

As we have seen, in his defence of England's mixed constitution in 1642, Charles Herle asks where the ultimate arbitrariness of state should reside, and answers that the

¹²² Chatsworth, Hobbes MS E. 1. A. See also Malcolm 2007, pp. 109-10.

¹²³ Skinner 1996, pp. 428-30. Cf. Mathiowetz 2011, p. 112.

site must be the ‘*Votes of Parliament*’, where such ‘arbitrariness’ is ‘alayed and balanced by *number, trust, self-interest*’ and is therefore ‘best secured from doing hurt’.¹²⁴ He bases this conclusion on the assumption of ‘mens aptness rather to warpe after their *interests* and *ends*, then to be kept upright by their *skills* and *oaths*’.¹²⁵ From what we have already concluded, we can see the problems Hobbes might identify here. Not only does he argue that we make oaths of obedience in order to achieve certain ends, but also that it is the changeability and unreliability of men’s interests that cause such mixed arrangements to fall down. As he argues in chapter 16 of *Leviathan*:

if the number be odde, as three, or more, (men, or assemblies;) whereof every one has by a Negative Voice, authority to take away the effect of all the Affirmative Voices of the rest, This number is no Representative; because by the diversity of Opinions, and Interests of men, it becomes oftentimes, and in cases of the greatest consequence, a mute Person, and unapt, as for many things else, so for the government of a Multitude, especially in time of Warre.¹²⁶

Again, the emphasis is on the fatality to the commonwealth of people’s interests being considered appropriate as factors in the sovereign will. The idea of mixing the various and particular interests of even a sovereign assembly is shown to render the Hobbesian sovereign fatally ‘mute’ and ‘unapt’. In this sense, therefore, it is good for no one to rely on the ‘*self-interest*’ of the various members of the two houses of parliament.

Hobbes avoids the kind of literary and philosophical activity engaged in by writers such as Nedham, who in *The Case of the Kingdom*, attempted to persuade certain groups in England of what was in their ‘proper’ interests.¹²⁷ As we have seen before, this conception that if people do what is truly in their interests, the result would be better than if they simply did what they perceive to be in their interests, is not one to which Hobbes subscribes. But there is another aspect of these writings which are incompatible

¹²⁴ Herle 1642, p. 17.

¹²⁵ Herle 1642, pp. 17-18. See also my discussion of Herle in chapter 1 above.

¹²⁶ Hobbes 2012, p. 250.

¹²⁷ See chapter 1 above.

with Hobbes's political theory, and that is the notion that certain groups in society necessarily share the same interests. As we have established, individuals have particular interests, which coincide with each other only by chance.

Both Nedham and John Warr argue that the interest of the people (as a whole) is in 'liberty', and as we shall see, this become a mainstay of republican theory in the 1650s.¹²⁸ Again, this does not conform to Hobbes's deployment of the vocabulary, as he is keen to insist that interests are 'different' and 'changeable'. Neither is Nedham's appeal to the interest of the king in maintaining the liberty of the people at all Hobbesian. Hobbes was scornful of the attempts made by republican writers to appeal to the liberty of the people in any sense other than liberty as 'the absence of Opposition', when 'by Oppostion, I mean externall Impediments of motion'.¹²⁹

This is not to suggest that Hobbes did not consider the primary aim of sovereignty to be the safety and good of the people. Indeed, in describing the duties of the sovereign in chapter 30 of *Leviathan*, he leads with this assertion:

The OFFICE of the Sovereign, (be it a Monarch, or an Assembly,) consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the Sovereign Power, namely the procuration of *the safety of the people*; to which he is obliged by the Law of Nature, and to render an account thereof to God, the Author of that Law, and to none but him. But by Safety here, is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himselfe.¹³⁰

Of course, there is a dramatic difference between the appeal to *salus populi, suprema lex* and the idea that government is instituted in order for the particular interests of the people to be fulfilled. The vast majority of writers on political subjects in this period invoke *salus populi*, including Hobbes, and the fact that they do so does not make all these

¹²⁸ Nedham 1647, p. 5; Warr 1992, pp. 78-9.

¹²⁹ Hobbes 2012, p. 324. See also Skinner 2002d, pp. 209-37.

¹³⁰ Hobbes 2012, p. 520.

writers Ciceronian.¹³¹ The crucial difference is between those who perceive the important interest as that of the unitary state and those who assume it to be the aggregate of the particular interests of the multitude. It is on this issue that Hobbes's use of the word 'interest' clearly engages with the way in which it was being used by those he describes as 'the democraticall gentlemen', such as Henry Parker.

Parker remarks in his *Observations* (1642) that 'two things especially are aymed at in Parliaments, not to be attained by other meanes', and identifies the first as 'that the interest of the people might be satisfied'.¹³² In his *Contra-Replicant* a year later he emphasises on more than one occasion that 'the peoples interest' takes the form of the 'Legislative power' of 'passing Lawes'.¹³³ Finally, in *Jus Populi* (1644), Parker claims that 'Arbitrary Government does not onely rob slaves of that naturall interest which they have in themselves, and States of their publike Interests which they have above lords and slaves; but it is often a very strong Incentive to cause an abuse of that usurped Interest'.¹³⁴ Hobbes's claim against this would surely be that, as we have already seen, it is only by virtue of arbitrary power that there is a public interest in the first place.

In *Behemoth*, his history of the English Civil Wars, Hobbes has one of his interlocutors claim that 'the common people alwaies have been, and always will be, ignorant of their duty to the publick, as never mediating anything but their particular interest, in other things following their immediate leaders; which are either the Preachers, or the most potent of the Gentlemen that dwell amongst them'.¹³⁵ Here Hobbes is reiterating his attack on his favourite targets of scorn: the church divines and the democratical

¹³¹ Cf. Vallance 2009, p. 898.

¹³² [Parker] 1642, p. 5.

¹³³ [Parker] 1643, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁴ [Parker] 1644, p. 38.

¹³⁵ Hobbes 2010, p. 158.

gentlemen. The upshot of this attack is that the people have to be educated, not in what is in their interest, but in what is just and unjust, in the pursuit of peace.¹³⁶

However, while Hobbes might not intend it, there are aspects of his conception of interest which would much later go on to inform the utilitarianism of figures such as David Hume and perhaps even Jeremy Bentham, in which interests have a much more positive role to play in dictating policy. The most utilitarian point in Hobbes's theory comes not in *Leviathan* but in the *Dialogue on the Common Laws*, in which the philosopher and the lawyer agree about that 'interest, which is to every Man allowed in the preservation of himself from pain and damage'.¹³⁷ As before, this is 'preservation ... from pain and damage', and not protection against death, which Hobbes maintains is a fundamental part of the covenant. But this is a late and subtle development, in that Hobbes is providing some space for particular interests, albeit when very narrowly confined to preventing pain, rather than causing pleasure.

This chapter has sought to show that Hobbes's deployment of the vocabulary of interest was based on concerns which were of his own time, and which reflected shifts in political debates occurring throughout the course of the seventeenth century, as well as influences which stretched back as far as ancient Greece. Furthermore, we have seen that the most important aspect of Hobbes's use of the vocabulary was in its relation to the new theory of the state he developed in *Leviathan*, and specifically the conception of the state as a fictional person with interests of its own.¹³⁸ If any notion of the 'public interest' can be attributed to Hobbes, it is this notion, and my next chapter will discuss how the idea of an interest which was specifically *public* came to be defined in the decade subsequent to the publication of *Leviathan*.

¹³⁶ Hobbes 2010, pp. 158-9. Cf. Holmes 1990, pp. 144-5.

¹³⁷ Hobbes 2005, pp. 77-8. See also Hirschman 1997, pp. 108-9.

¹³⁸ Runciman 2003, pp. 34-5.

English Republicanism and the manipulation of interests

I

This chapter will focus on the varieties of republican responses, presented over the course of the 1650s, to the problem of private interests and their relation to the common good. Until now, with a few exceptions, the writers we have been considering had argued that particular interests were very rarely compatible with the common good, were not to be trusted, and were certainly not to be used as a basis for the building of a state. However, following the regicide of Charles I in January 1649, an action self-consciously taken in the name of the ‘public interest’, republican theorists increasingly sought to show that the threat posed by private interests could be neutralised through the construction of institutions that would channel them and manipulate them towards a consideration of the common good.

We shall consider in turn three very different manifestations of this trend. The first, given form by the radical critic of the English Commonwealth, John Streater, was the idea that the public interest had to be owned equally by every member of the commonwealth. He argues that the role of the state is to ensure that everyone’s interest is equally accounted for. The second approach to be examined is that of Marchamont Nedham. Closely following the theories of Machiavelli, and the approach of Henri de Rohan, Nedham conceives of the political arena as one of almost constant conflict between competing interests. The two interests to be reckoned with are that of the people (liberty) and that of the monarchy (prerogative, which is dangerous to the liberty of the people). In this analysis it is made clear that only one of these interests can emerge triumphant. It is for this reason that Nedham stresses over and over again the need for the people to remain vigilant against the return of the Stuart monarchy. At the same time, he takes great pains to stress to most subsets of his audience (just as he had when writing

in favour of the monarchy in 1647) precisely how it continued to be in their own particular interests to keep out the monarchy. Finally, we shall consider the rival theory of the commonwealth presented by James Harrington. Of all republican theorists, he was the strongest exponent of the idea that the English state, to achieve the status of a true commonwealth, had to be completely refounded. Harrington stresses that, rather than any dominant interest being taken to be the public interest, it is important that the commonwealth be given the ideal founding which will ensure that all particular interests (whether of the people or not) will be excluded from the institutions of government, and that (at the same time), the government is ordered in such a way that all particular interests can somehow be accommodated.

I do not claim that these were thoughts shared by all English republicans in the 1650s. Indeed, a number of writers continued to exclude any consideration of interests (other than pejoratively) from their conception of the ideal commonwealth. This approach is particularly found in those who saw the republic as the perfection of human nature rather than as simply the best political settlement to be had. In turn, this suggests a link with those who advocated a 'rule of the saints'. Primarily we should look to John Milton. From as early as 1649, Milton was keen to distance himself from any discussion of interests. In his *Observations upon the Articles of Peace*, he talks only disparagingly of the Catholic 'Church-interest' attempting to ensure the survival of monarchy for their own purposes.¹ In *Eikonoklastes*, published in the same year and written as a riposte to John Gauden's attempt to turn Charles I into a martyr in the book *Eikon Basilike*, Milton highlights the hypocrisy manifested by those who 'too often cursed in others' the pursuit of a 'wicked cause and interest', only 'to prosper not in the same themselves'.² This theme

¹ Milton 1962, p. 316. Milton also uses this vocabulary in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (see Milton 1962, pp. 255-6).

² Milton 1962, pp. 348-9. This quotation comes from a section added to the second edition of the work.

is continued in his later work, *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, where he condemns the alliance of interests between the monarchy and the bishops.³

It is also true that there is a singular moment in *Eikonoklastes*, at which Milton seems to adopt the Machiavellian tones of a thinker like Nedham. He argues that, through actions such as the imposition of ship money, the king ‘brought by these irregular courses the peoples interest and his own to so direct an opposition, that he might foresee plainly, if nothing but a Parliament [sic] could save the people, it must necessarily be his undoing’.⁴ But this moment is fleeting and left undeveloped. One theme which Milton does consistently take over from writers such as Henri de Rohan, Calybutte Downing and Nedham (and one we have already encountered) is the idea that England was a country whose special ‘national’ interest was as a bulwark of Protestantism.⁵ This notion that England was a nation singled-out by providence as the ‘elect’ was one much strengthened by the outcome of the epic struggle with Charles.

II

We have already encountered Charles Herle as a central protagonist in the introduction of the vocabulary of interests into English political discourse in the 1640s. In 1654, Herle notes that ‘the word *Interest* is a word of late much come into use among us’.⁶ Although not all writers are as explicit as Herle in drawing attention to the new prevalence of the term, it is clear that it is a concept that begs for some form of definition. Furthermore, as Herle himself points out in parentheses, ‘usage is the best rule of language’; the way in which the term is *used* by the writers over the course of the following decade will furnish us with a definition.⁷

³ Milton 1660, p. 70.

⁴ Milton 1962, p. 353.

⁵ See, for example, Milton 1660, p. 93; Milton 1962, p. 330.

⁶ Herle 1654, p. 176. Cf. Herle 1655, p. 169.

⁷ Herle 1654, p. 176.

It is also striking that the domestic crisis in England ended with a regicide committed, to an extent, in the name of ‘the public interest’, a term newly coined in the 1640s. In *The Charge of the Commons of England*, drawn up by the Charles’s chief prosecutor John Cooke on 20 January 1649, it is argued:

[all the] *wicked Designs, Wars*, and evill practises of Him, the said *Charls Stuart*, have been and are carried on for the advancement and upholding of the Personal Interest of *Will and Power*, and pretended *Prerogative* to Himself and his Family, against the publike Interest, Common Right, Liberty, Justice, and Peace *Of the People of this Nation*, by, and for whom he was entrusted.⁸

This passage was replicated (almost word-for-word) in the sentence drawn up by the High Court of Justice, sitting in judgment of the king a week later.⁹ Approximately six weeks after that, the new republic made the formal move of abolishing the office of king entirely. In the attendant document, it is made clear that the existence of monarchy itself is dangerous to liberty, as ‘naturally any one person in power makes it his interest to incroach upon the just freedom and liberty of the people, and to promote the setting up of their own will and power above the laws, that so they might enslave these kingdoms to their own lust’.¹⁰ Finally, on 19 May, an Act was passed declaring England to be a republic, and in which the Rump Parliament was formally empowered to ‘appoint and constitute officers and ministers under them for the good of the people ... without any King or House of Lords’.¹¹ Thus, not only did theorists of the 1650s perceive a need to define what was meant by interest (and how this related to the common good); there was also now an imperative to give content to the idea of a specifically *public* interest. If it was worth killing a king over, it was surely necessary to give it full definition.

What I suggest is that most republican theorists in the aftermath of the regicide ended up collapsing the idea of the public interest into the interest of the people against the

⁸ *The Charge of the Commons of England* 1649, pp. 7-8. Cf. Gardiner 1979, pp. 373-4.

⁹ Gardiner 1979, p. 378.

¹⁰ Gardiner 1979, pp. 385-6.

¹¹ Gardiner 1979, p. 388.

corrupt interest of the king. By 1653 it was possible to see the Rump of the Long Parliament as being just another danger to the people of England.¹² In May of that year Cromwell finally stormed the House with his musketeers, forcefully dissolving the Rump, and replacing it effectively with his own sole rule, though with at least the show of having parliaments to pass laws. In *The Instrument of Government* of 16 December 1653, it was stated that Cromwell was to be made Lord Protector for life, though the office was to be ‘elective, not hereditary’.¹³ The *Instrument* also proclaimed that those who had fought on the side of the royalists during the civil wars would be barred from election to the Protectoral Parliament. As we shall see, this was justified by Marchamont Nedham on the basis of *lex talionis* (the right of the people to punish those who had sought to limit their liberties).¹⁴ Henry Vane argued that such people could be excluded as they had ‘forfeited their interest in the whole Body’ of the commonwealth.¹⁵ Like Nedham, Vane claims that the power of the sword is no good, unless it is wielded by the people.¹⁶

The author of *England’s Standard* (1659) argues similarly, that ‘all interest that are useless, oppressive, and destructive to the general good and just Liberty of the nation may be taken away’.¹⁷ It is stressed that the role of Parliament is to ensure the ascendancy of the people’s interest (most commonly conceived as liberty) against the prerogative of the monarch. Another anonymous tract of 1659, *Englands Safety in the Law’s Supremacy*, argues that monarchy, by its very nature, is antithetical to the common good and general interest, stating that it ‘could not but design their [the people’s] embezzlement and subversion’, its interest being ‘within and distinct from the peoples’.¹⁸ The reintroduction of the Stuarts would serve only to ‘weaken the public interest’ and thereby cause

¹² Gardiner 1979, pp. 402-3.

¹³ Gardiner 1979, pp. 415-16. Of course, within four years, this clause had been undermined by the elevation of Oliver’s Son, Richard Cromwell, to the status of heir apparent. See Gardiner 1979, p. 464.

¹⁴ Nedham 1659, pp. 27-8.

¹⁵ Vane 1656, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶ Vane 1656, p. 15.

¹⁷ *England’s Standard* 1659, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Englands Safety in the Law’s Supremacy* 1659, pp. 9-10.

corruption to creep into government once again.¹⁹ Thus, the public interest was only to be ensured by the protection of the people's liberties, through the maintenance of the ascendancy of Parliament.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the only way in which a theorist of the state like Hobbes could envisage or talk of an idea of 'the public interest', would be as the interest of that fictional person of the state with which he is so concerned. Soon after *Leviathan* was published in 1651, William Rand wrote to his friend Benjamin Worsley, claiming: 'I am of opinion, and have long bin with Mr Hobbs, that the reading of such bookes as Livy's History has bin a great rub in the way of advancement of the Interest of his Leviathanlike Monarchs.'²⁰ Of course, a careful reader will immediately see Rand's error here. Although he rightly draws attention to the all-important distinction between humanist tradition and Hobbes's contrary project of constructing a revolutionary civil science, he mistakes Hobbes's defence of absolute sovereignty for a defence of the interest of the monarch. He makes the signal error of too quickly conflating the interests of the sovereign with the interests of the being which the sovereign represents: the state.

The distinct interest of the monarch has been established to be the prerogative powers attendant on his (or her) office. As we have seen, Hobbes is reticent in giving content to the notion of what the public interest of the state might actually be. Indeed, some commentators have gone so far as to claim that it is this lack of willingness to give considerable personality to the fictional person of the state that limits the wider implications of Hobbes's theory.²¹ Hobbes challenges the notion that the interest of the people has to prevail, but fails to give substance to this idea adequately enough to convince many of his readers. So, many readers simply fell back on the idea that the monarchy itself provided such substance. It is not until the synthesis provided by

¹⁹ *Englands Safety in the Law's Supremacy* 1659, p. 20.

²⁰ Letter from Rand to Worsley (11 August 1651) in Hartlib Papers 62/21/2A. For drawing my attention to this letter, I am indebted to Skinner 2002b, p. 308.

²¹ Runciman 1997, ch. 2.

Harrington, that we are furnished with a public interest which does not rely on any one interest (either the people's or the monarch's), but which also has substance enough of its own to convince readers of its veracity.

III

We should start, however, with a thinker who unashamedly pointed to the interest of the people as the only starting point to what might be considered a public interest: John Streater (c.1620-77). Some recent historians have sought to insist on Streater's stature as political thinker. They argue that he has been largely dismissed as an idealist and utopian, but that this reputation is undeserved. Joad Raymond, attributing the obscure newsbook *The Grand Publick Informer* to Streater's pen, has argued that his republican rhetorical positioning is just as sophisticated as that of figures such as Milton and Nedham.²² Nigel Smith insists that Streater should be seen as the most authentic representative of the everyday republicanism of the radicalised among the masses: 'Streater is the voice of a simple and genuinely popular classical republicanism.'²³ These arguments are convincing in drawing our attention to what is historically interesting about Streater. It is clear that he was able to be more candid and more radical in his republicanism as a result of not being so invested in it as its employed propagandists. Jonathan Scott is also keen to attribute an important place to Streater in the development of 'commonwealth principles' in his adoption of 'a neo-Platonist spiritual mechanics', which he claims was close to Harrington's.²⁴

However, although Streater's argument is indeed one of the most radically democratic statements of republican political thought in the 1650s, his theory does appear somewhat naïve or unsophisticated when he refers to the debate over interests. He argues what very

²² Raymond 1998, pp. 567-74.

²³ Smith 1995, p. 144.

²⁴ Scott 2004a, pp. 180-1.

few thinkers are prepared to do at this stage: that *all* private interests can be served at the same time as the public interest (or common good). In *A glympse of that Jewell, Judicial, Just, Preserving Libertie* (1653), Streater states that, in a true commonwealth, ‘every one is to understand he is equally interessed with any member in respect of the common Libertie, and there is no difference but in point of Trust’.²⁵ Analysing the oaths taken by ancient Romans entering political office, he insists that ‘the Commonwealth of *Rome* had a necessity to provide against partiality, and promoting of private interest’.²⁶ Thus, everyone had an interest in promoting liberty, and private interests had to be kept out of the political institutions of the state. He also emphasises, like any good Machiavellian theorist, that ‘the judgments of the people are not so subject to be corrupted as great persons’, and this is because ‘great persons are swayed by severall ends and interests’.²⁷ Here we see articulated a strong claim that the upholding of the people’s interest in liberty is the crucial end of the institutions of the commonwealth, and that this is to be achieved by the balancing of various private interests against one another.

In a later statement of his radical republican ideas, however, Streater adds a claim that is much less persuasive. In 1659, he published a pamphlet in support of the continuation of the Long Parliament (recently reconstituted), in which he not only reiterates the legality of Parliament’s original taking-up of arms against Charles, but also posits a rather novel theory of interests. He argues that the ‘Good Old Cause’ of republicanism is characterised by the survival of the right of the people to take up arms against their oppressors, and that this is best ensured by Parliament, rather than the return of the Stuart monarchy.²⁸ He further challenges the argument that the straightforward rule of one interest over another (which we might see as Nedham’s argument) is unhealthy, as ‘by this means, there would never be settlement in the Nation; but it would still be rowled

²⁵ Streater 1653, p. 8.

²⁶ Streater 1653, pp. 13-14.

²⁷ Streater 1653, p. 12. Cf. Machiavelli 1970, pp. 252-7.

²⁸ Streater 1659a, p. 9.

from one Interest to another'.²⁹ He makes it clear that the two interests (people and monarchy) are in no way comparable:

It cannot be intended by the Law of God, Nature, or the Political Institutions of Man, That the *Prince* can be Superiour to the Whole; or that his Interest, Right of Government, Judgment, Authority or Reason should be put in the ballance with the Interest, Right of Government, Judgment, Authority and Reason of the whole *People*.³⁰

Instead, he argues, the government has to 'equally respect all Interests', and that this is what we can expect from the present government.³¹ He seems to be simply reiterating his assertion that no individual interest should be preferred over any other. But in making this argument, he also argues that private interests can all be accommodated, where no other author dares to do so.³²

The only other thinker to claim that his ideal government would be able to accommodate all private interests is James Harrington. The crucial difference is that Harrington (as we shall see) goes into incredible detail as to how this harmonisation of interests will be achieved, and takes pains to stress that specific institutions of the state will be necessary to ensure it. Streater had a hand in nursing Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana* through publication,³³ and sought to emulate him in the construction of the utopian commonwealth of Ragouse in 1659.³⁴ But where Harrington spends hundreds of pages and numerous long, intricate and, for some, tedious analyses on the constitutional principles at stake in the foundation of *Oceana*, Streater limits himself to a perfunctory three pages. Streater's thought simply did not have the time or space to develop the philosophical or rhetorical rigour and sophistication towards which it aspired.

²⁹ Streater 1659a, pp. 14-15.

³⁰ Streater 1659a, p. 4.

³¹ Streater 1659a, pp. 14-15.

³² On brief discussion of Streater's 'balance' of interests, see Cotton 1991, p. 168.

³³ See Pocock 1970, pp. 33-6.

³⁴ Streater 1659b, pp. 6-8.

IV

Another writer who lamented that he did not have enough time or space to develop his polemical tracts into more systematic treatises was Marchamont Nedham.³⁵ I have already discussed Nedham's initial deployment of the vocabulary of interests and its application to the political situation of England towards the end of the civil wars. In *The Case of the Kingdom Stated* (1647) we can see quite clearly the influence of Machiavelli and Rohan on this conceptualisation of the politics of the time.³⁶ In this section we shall see that interest proves to be perhaps Nedham's only enduring preoccupation.³⁷ The major works I shall discuss are Nedham's defence of Cromwell's Instrument of Government, *A True State of the Case of the Commonwealth* (1654), his republication of a number of his editorials from *Mercurius Politicus* in the form of *The Excellencie of a Free State* in 1656 and finally his desperate plea for the survival of the Commonwealth in the form of *Interest will not Lie* in 1659.

In his first work under the Commonwealth, Nedham does not use the vocabulary of interests as much as in his other work. As I suggested in chapter 1, this can be accounted for by his desire to maintain national unity, against 'intrenchment upon our *Nationall Interest*'.³⁸ Indeed, at the opening of the second section of the work, Nedham states that he seeks to uncover the 'nature of the Designes of the severall Parties claiming an Interest in this Nation'.³⁹ The fact that they *claim* an interest suggests that this interest does not actually exist, except as a reason for factionalism and disunity. When discussing the case of the Scots, Nedham expresses the fear that their interest will cause them to take up arms against the English once again: 'it is to be feared, this so much desired

³⁵ Worden 1994b, p. 61; Worden 1995, p. 303.

³⁶ See chapter 1 above.

³⁷ Worden 2007, p. 17.

³⁸ Nedham 1650, p. 69.

³⁹ Nedham 1650, p. 33.

Interest of theirs may ... be driven on farther by the *Sword*, than yet we are aware of'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he criticises those (in particular, the Levellers) who paint the Army chiefs as 'betrayers of the *publique Interest*', merely because their actions are not acceptable to the Levellers' 'own humor'.⁴¹ The suggestion here is definitely that the vocabulary of the public interest is only used by those who would seek to hold an unnecessary power over others. In his subsequent writings of the 1650s however, Nedham maintains an allegiance to the Machiavellian analysis of politics as a struggle between competing interests, in which the interest of the people must prevail. The institutions necessary for the manipulation of private interests to serve the common good are now said to be those which further the maintenance of the people's interest, into which the public interest is collapsed.

The first work in which Nedham develops these themes is his *True State of the Case of the Commonwealth*, published in 1654. He begins with a reiteration of the grounds of legitimacy for the taking up of arms against the king during the civil wars. Nedham restates the classic case, that 'we took up Arms against the King because he demeaned himself as a Tyrant, and had projected a wicked designe to introduce his own Will and Power above the Law'.⁴² In making this argument, he also repeats the contention that the regicides had made in 1649. Their aim had been 'that he [Charles] might not accomplish that designe which had been the business of his whole Reign', which had consisted in 'the advancement of his own and his Posterities Will and Power, against the publick Interest of the Nation'.⁴³ Nedham returns to the same point at the very end of the pamphlet, where he again echoes the charges of Parliament in accusing Charles of 'enthroning

⁴⁰ Nedham 1650, p. 66.

⁴¹ Nedham 1650, pp. 77-8.

⁴² Nedham 1654, p. 5.

⁴³ Nedham 1654, p. 6.

himself upon an Interest of meer will and power, against the common Interest of the People'.⁴⁴

Since the main intention of this pamphlet is to defend Cromwell's forcible dissolution of the Rump in May 1653, Nedham justifies the rule of the Protector, embracing him as the guarantor that parliaments will not be allowed to sit for too long. In doing this he argues that the institution of regular parliamentary elections will be 'more agreeable to the temper of this People', as 'the prime end of the Parliamentary constitution is, to make Laws and redress grievances'.⁴⁵ On a number of occasions in *The True Case* Nedham reminds us that the king represents such an interest, and that the threat of Charles II's return is still very real. But he is also keen to stress that factions within Parliament are equally dangerous to the common good, arguing that 'it is no hard matter to discern how the common Interest of this Nation would have been swallowed up by a particular Faction, and what a pernicious Engine it must have proved in the perverting of all Order among Men'.⁴⁶ He therefore writes of the 'common Interest' of England being in the regular changing of those in charge. As we shall see, this principle of republicanism as the ability of the people to seek redress of grievance without having to deal with the embedded corruption of a particular interest becomes very important at the end of Harrington's theory.

In 1656, Nedham published *The Excellencie of a Free State*, a collection of his editorials from *Mercurius Politicus*. In his note to his readers, he underlines the need for such a volume:

taking notice of late with what impudence, and (the more is the pity) confidence, the enemies of this commonwealth in their public writings and discourses labour to undermine the dear-bought liberties and freedoms of the people, in their declared

⁴⁴ Nedham 1654, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁵ Nedham 1654, pp. 22-3.

⁴⁶ Nedham 1654, p. 18.

interest of a free-state; I thought it high time, but counter-working them, to crush the cockatrice in the egg, that so it might never grow to be a bird of prey.⁴⁷

Thus, although Nedham does not go so far as to argue that the public interest *is* in liberty, it is clear that the people have an interest in living in a free state. In the vast majority of incidents, it is clear that Nedham was primarily concerned with the interest of the people in liberty, rather than the public interest. When the public interest is mentioned, liberty is not immediately associated with it.

Again, as in *A True State of the Case*, Nedham emphasises that the ‘grand cankerworm of a Commonwealth’ (i.e. monarchy) constitutes a corrupt ‘faction ... and a promoting of an interest, that is distinct from the true and declared interest of state’.⁴⁸ This reinforces the distinction we have already noted between the interest of the monarch (which is in holding arbitrary power) and the interest of the people (which is in being free from such power). For Nedham, the people’s interest in liberty has to be safeguarded at all costs, as it is in constant danger of subjection to tyranny. He also believes it to be crucial that only the people will fight for liberty as it is only their interest and no one else’s. The language Nedham uses in this respect reflects his concern: ‘The truth of it is, the interest of freedom is a virgin that every one seeks to deflower [deflower]; and like a virgin, it must be kept from any other form, or else (so great is the lust of mankind after dominion) there follows a rape upon the first opportunity.’⁴⁹ As with many republican theorists at this time, Nedham has an almost paranoid obsession with the need to assure the ascendancy of the people’s interest in liberty over the monarch’s interest in holding arbitrary power.

And it is not merely the sinister interest of the Stuarts that Nedham expresses fears about. Indeed, *The Excellencie* is littered with warnings against allowing any individual or

⁴⁷ Nedham 1767, p. v.

⁴⁸ Nedham 1767, pp. 5-6. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 79 (4-11 December 1651), pp. 1255-6. For a list of those *Mercurius Politicus* editorials which ended up in *Excellencie*, see Milton French 1936, pp. 242-4.

⁴⁹ Nedham 1767, pp. 18-19. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 3 (1-8 January 1652), p. 1320.

family being allowed to become too great or powerful.⁵⁰ This extends to the institution of the senate. Citing Roman constitutional history, Nedham claims that even after the tyrannical king Tarquin Superbus had been removed from power and his family exiled, ‘the power and interest of kingship was still retained in the senate’.⁵¹ It was only after Roman ‘liberty was fully settled in a succession of the people’s supreme assemblies’ that the interest of the people in liberty could truly be said to have been realized. Nedham proceeds to explain the reason for this:

the nobility in the senate, being men of another interest (however they pretended) and, sometimes by cunning, sometimes by corrupting, getting trust from the people, did by combination and compliance with their fellow senators, so garble, perplex, and turmoil the people’s affairs, concerns, and understandings, that at length, what they could never have done by force, as opposites, they effected by fraud, as friends, to deprive the people of a quiet and comfortable enjoyment of their freedom.⁵²

This was not only true of ancient Rome; Nedham also points us to contemporary Venice, which was revered for its stability as an aristocratic republic. He argues that the Duke, who represents the monarchical part of the Venetian constitution, is only limited in his power by the senate, and that this effectively excludes the people ‘from all interest in government, the power of making and executing laws, and bearing of offices, with all other immunities’, and therefore leaves them without liberty.⁵³

Nedham stresses the importance of ‘the due and orderly succession of the supreme assemblies’, as was the case in ancient Rome.⁵⁴ He cites historical precedents, arguing that with a regular rotation of government, ‘the people are ever indued with a more magnanimous, active, and noble temper of spirit, than under the grandeur of any standing power whatsoever’. This contentment with government, Nedham suggests,

⁵⁰ Nedham 1767, pp. 106-8. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 101 (6-12 May 1652), pp. 1587-9.

⁵¹ Nedham 1767, pp. 99-100. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 100 (29 April – 6 May 1652), p. 1571.

⁵² Nedham 1767, pp. 131-2. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 106 (10-17 June 1652), p. 1659.

⁵³ Nedham 1767, pp. 31-2. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 86 (22-9 January 1652), pp. 1367-8.

⁵⁴ Nedham 1767, p. 1. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 77 (20-7 November 1651), p. 1221.

‘arises from that apprehension which every particular man hath of his own immediate share in the public interest, as well as of that security which he possesses in the enjoyment of his private fortune, free from the reach of any arbitrary power’.⁵⁵ The key to resolving the tension between particular interests and the common good is for government institutions to ensure that private interests are somehow incorporated in or served by the public interest.

Again drawing on Roman history, Nedham speaks of the need to ensure that only those who have ‘an interest in the public’ should be allowed to be part of the citizen militia.⁵⁶ The ingenuity of this text is that Nedham wants to limit access to the common good to those who have an interest in it, and by doing so ensure that all interests conform to the common good. But he does this by making the institutions and instruments of government available to as many as he can persuade. He argues that there is a maxim too often forgotten: ‘That the interest of monarchy [by which is meant prerogative] may reside in the hands of the many, as well as a single person.’⁵⁷ The idea that (through institutions) the people can be allowed to hold the prerogative office is one that seems to run through republican thought of this period; indeed, James Harrington authors a book entitled *The Prerogative of Popular Government* in 1658.

But before we move on to consider Harrington, we must first examine Nedham’s final work of republican propaganda. On the verge of Restoration in 1659, Nedham reverts to the style he had adopted in *The Case of the Kingdom* (1647) and the *The Case of the Commonwealth* (1650), again taking each domestic group in England and explaining what he sees to be in their best interests. In *Interest will not Lie: Or, a View of England’s True Interest*, Nedham resorted to the same rhetorical technique he had used the last time the Commonwealth of England seemed to be at risk. His title page states that he writes ‘in

⁵⁵ Nedham 1767, p. 25. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 85 (15-22 January 1652), p. 1349.

⁵⁶ Nedham 1767, pp. 114-19. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 103 (20-7 May 1652), pp. 1609-24.

⁵⁷ Nedham 1767, p. 97. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus* no. 100 (29 April – 6 May 1652), pp. 1569-73.

refutation of a treasonable Pamphlet, entituled, *The Interest of England Stated*, most probably referring to a book of that title attributed to John Fell.⁵⁸ This reinforces the notion that individuals (and groups) have a true interest, which they might be mistaken about.

Nedham refers directly to Rohan's maxim, arguing that if politicians or journalists such as himself were able to persuade them, people would come to see their 'true' interests. Not only would this make their behaviour more predictable and easier to manipulate. It would also mean that the majority of people would see their interest as being vested in the continuing ascendancy of the liberty of the people over the pretended prerogative of the Stuart monarchy.⁵⁹

As in *The Excellencie*, Nedham continues to suggest that anyone showing themselves prepared to fight for the interest of the people can be reconciled simply by being participants in it. Indeed, in 'the Preamble' to the pamphlet, Nedham promises:

when I have made it appear, by scanning the Interests and Concernments of all Parties among us, that no one party, no, not the *Royalists* themselves (except only the *Papist*) can hope for any good by the restitution of *Charles Stuart*, but must necessarily partake in the common calamity as well as others, then I suppose the Conclusion will naturally follow: *That it is the Interest of all to keep him out.*⁶⁰

However, by contrast with *The Excellencie*, Nedham does not express any more suspicion of parliaments, and returns to the argument that Parliament (albeit still purged of many of its members) is the best guarantor of the people's liberty. He describes parliament as 'the *Butt*, at which the Adversaries shoot all their bitter Arrows of reproach and envy ... because their [Parliament's] Being is the grand Bulwark of our security'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Nedham 1659, p. 1. Probably referring to [Fell] 1659, but could also refer to Corbet 1659, since this is the book to which Richard Baxter seeks to respond, and Nedham says he will quote from Baxter in order to persuade the Presbyterians (such as Corbet). For discussion of Baxter, Corbet and Fell, see chapter 4 below.

⁵⁹ Nedham 1659, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Nedham 1659, p. 4.

⁶¹ Nedham 1659, p. 27.

Nedham defends the continued exclusion of those members who opposed the regicide in 1649, and Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump in 1653, since 'there was no other way to preserve the Rights and Interest of the Nation, which those members had laboured to destroy'.⁶² Furthermore, he seeks to undermine the legitimacy of the Cheshire rebels who at the time were demanding the reinstatement of the secluded members; Nedham accuses the rebels of merely pretending to serve the public interest in making their demands.⁶³ Finally, he defends the protectoral parliaments, which were convened under Cromwell, supposedly retaining the right of confirming legislation. Nedham claims that the members of these parliaments 'sat only in respect to the Interest of the people, who Originally and Fundamentally alwaies had and have a Right to meet to consult for the common Good'.⁶⁴

Nedham's later works could be seen as a continuation of the narratives of Machiavelli and Rohan, both of whom argued that politics lives and dies by the competing interests of individuals and groups. Nedham is also still keen to show (as he was in his first work of this kind, *The Case of the Kingdom* in 1647) that the interest of the people in liberty has to be considered supreme.⁶⁵ But this concern with the supremacy of the people's interest, and the collapsing of the public interest into this category, is not adopted wholesale by all republican theorists. James Harrington, whom we come to in the final two sections of this chapter, defines the public interest as bigger and (perhaps) grander than simply the interest of the people. In doing so, he also questioned Nedham's suspicion of institutions such as the senate, which he saw as crucial in maintaining the public interest. In particular, we shall consider Harrington's *Oceana*, the publication of which was first advertised in Nedham's own *Mercurius Politicus* in 1656.⁶⁶

⁶² Nedham 1659, p. 31.

⁶³ Nedham 1659, p. 32-3.

⁶⁴ Nedham 1659, p. 40.

⁶⁵ See chapter 1 above.

⁶⁶ *Mercurius Politicus* 334 (29 October – 6 November 1656), p. 7362.

A number of scholars, in discussing James Harrington (1611-77), have referred to his use of the vocabulary (some talk of a ‘language’) of interests.⁶⁷ In this section I aim to provide more substance than has so far been given to the implications of this claim for his political philosophy. In particular, I shall attempt to ascertain how Harrington defines ‘interest’ and to what extent he is endorsing it as a foundation or basis for civil government. The tendency has been to assume that Harrington’s theory does not change between the composition of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* in 1656 and his final political work, *A System of Politics* in 1660. But his style alters radically between the two works (from a detailed utopia to a precise and snappy set of aphorisms), and the changes in his deployment of the vocabulary of interests and the implications for his political theory are at once far-reaching and much more subtle. These developments also suggest a complex engagement with other republicans and opponents of the new regime writing in the 1650s.

I shall argue that, in *Oceana*, Harrington’s theory has two fundamental characteristics. One is that he maintains the traditional conception that private interests cannot be a basis for constructing the common good, and that virtue relies on a rejection of our private interests. But he also offers the radical view that interests that are not private (but, instead, common) *can* in some sense be the basis for communal life. This might seem at first sight to resemble the traditional argument articulated wholly in terms of interests (rather than the common good). But there is also a tension here: how can interests be at once good and evil? The answer comes, for Harrington, from the republican past of ‘ancient prudence’, in which the ‘orders’ of the commonwealth are able to prevent particular interests from harming common ones.

⁶⁷ Blitzer 1960; Burgess 2009, pp. 352-60; Cromartie 1998, pp. 987-1009; Davis 1981, p. 220; Fukuda 1997, pp. 91-126; Gunn 1969, pp. 109-52; Knights 2005, pp. 104-5; Pincus 1998, pp. 705-36; Scott 1993, pp. 143-4; Scott 2004a, p. 184; Sullivan 2004, pp. 149-50; Worden 1994a, pp. 90-1.

For Harrington, the most dangerous threat is posed by a party forming itself into an interest distinct from the unity of society. This is a concern directed most potently towards the aristocracy and the clergy. Again the emphasis is laid upon institutions, in particular the Agrarian Law and the established civil religion, which are the only tools able to prevent this from occurring.⁶⁸ The singular virtue of any particular group can never be trusted to maintain virtue or the common good. Thus, as far as Harrington is concerned, those who argued for any version of the ‘rule of the saints’ were attempting to apply the consequences of their private interest to the whole of civil government, thus forming such a corrupt interest.

J. G. A. Pocock has, on a number of occasions, described Harrington’s *Oceana* as ‘a Machiavellian meditation on feudalism’.⁶⁹ If we limit this claim to the context of Pocock’s original focus – the conceptions of history prevalent in early-modern England – then this claim can hardly be challenged. However, there is much to take issue with when we consider this claim in relation to interests in the theories of Machiavelli and Harrington.

Of course, as we have already established, Machiavelli does not use the vocabulary of interests or *interessi*, despite the fact that it was clearly available to him.⁷⁰ It is also evident that Harrington’s notion of ‘orders’ springs from Machiavelli’s discussion of the Roman *ordini*, particularly in *The Discourses*.⁷¹ Furthermore, when Harrington seeks to establish that a monarchy will never be tolerated in a truly equal commonwealth, he owes much to Machiavelli’s discussion in chapter 5 of *The Prince*, in which it is argued that ‘anyone who becomes a master of a city accustomed to a free way of life, and does not destroy it, may

⁶⁸ On Harrington’s conception of civil religion, see Goldie 1987, pp. 197-222. Note, however, that Goldie does not couch the discussion in terms of interests.

⁶⁹ E.g. Pocock 1987, pp. 147, 321-34; Pocock 2003, pp. 385-405.

⁷⁰ See introduction above.

⁷¹ See Machiavelli 1970, esp. pt. 1.

expect to be destroyed by it himself'.⁷² For both Machiavelli and Harrington, the orders of the commonwealth and the liberty that was protected by such orders, constituted the source of the fierce allegiance of its members. It is to this that Harrington is referring when he first refers to the idea of 'ancient prudence'.

When addressing 'ancient prudence' in *Oceana*, Harrington begins by stating that this 'is that which Machiavel (whose books are neglected) is the only politician that hath gone about to retrieve', while others seek to destroy it.⁷³ He follows Machiavelli in the assertion that 'a commonwealth is seldom or never well turned or constituted, except it hav[ing] been the work of one man'.⁷⁴ For Harrington, this virtuous individual (whom he calls the Lord Archon) had then to stand down once the institutions necessary for the immortal commonwealth were set in place. This was in order to prevent him from becoming too powerful in his status as lawgiver, which would give him the potential to rule tyrannically, and for his own benefit rather than the common good, and why subsequently it is decided in *Oceana*, that Archons are to be elected for fixed terms.⁷⁵ However, not only does Harrington reject the Roman constitutional model which Machiavelli holds to be so successful, but he questions the modern adaptation of that model which Machiavelli himself appears to recommend.

Harrington argues that 'the balance of Oceana changing quite contrary to that of Rome, the manners of the people were not thereby corrupted, but on the contrary fitted for a commonwealth'.⁷⁶ Ultimately, Rome had fallen, because of internal corruption, to the rule of the one (i.e. monarchy) and thus proved herself to be a merely mortal commonwealth, compared with Oceana. At this point, Harrington is also pointedly critical of Machiavelli's approach to the very idea of corruption:

⁷² Machiavelli 1988, p. 18.

⁷³ Harrington 1977, p. 161.

⁷⁴ Harrington 1977, p. 207.

⁷⁵ Harrington 1977, p. 342.

⁷⁶ Harrington 1977, pp. 202-3.

A people (saith Machiavelli) that is corrupt is not capable of a commonwealth; but in showing what a corrupt people is, he hath either involved himself or me, nor can I otherwise come out of the labyrinth than by saying that, the balance altering, a people, as to the foregoing government, must of necessity be corrupt; but corruption in this sense signifieth no more than that the corruption of one government (as in natural bodies) is the generation of another; wherefore if the balance alter from monarchy, the corruption of the people in this case is that which maketh them capable of a commonwealth.⁷⁷

This passage is by no means easy to understand, especially if we want to know what exactly Harrington is being attacked for. It seems that Harrington is attempting to stand the notion of corruption on its head. Instead of the populace becoming corrupt by some kind of necessary internal process, the suggestion is that the people only appear corrupt when the balance of land-ownership changes.

This brings us to the heart of Harrington's theory of historical change, in which the form of government is determined historically based on who owns the preponderance of land. Thus, the supposed corruption and breakdown of the English state which resulted in the civil wars had nothing to do with a breakdown in the manners of the people, but was rather a result of a lack of political change in line with the shifting balance of the ownership of the land. Having a stake in land was part of what constituted interest and Harrington argued that by the time of the Civil Wars England was emerging from the aristocratic domination of land-ownership, and was in a position to claim that the preponderance of the land was possessed by the people. Thus, it was obvious that a new superstructure of government was necessary to reflect this economic situation. As this would involve the institution of popular sovereignty, all the corruption to which both Harrington and Machiavelli referred would be avoided. The key consequence of this historical analysis is that the anthropology of Machiavelli and Livy, based on two competing social orders (or *interests*), is now defunct. Thus, the application of a republican ideology to seventeenth-century England will need a new way of articulating interests.

⁷⁷ Harrington 1977, p. 202.

Machiavelli did not use the vocabulary of interests. However, as we have seen in relation to a number of theorists, many applied the vocabulary to his theory, which they believed best described the situation with which they were dealing.⁷⁸ In particular, Nedham embraced the notion that from a certain amount of tension and conflict between equally legitimate interests within the state, virtue and glory could be achieved. However, Harrington refused to believe that these interests were anything but mischievous. He argued that in order to achieve morality and ‘decency’, it was necessary to ‘raise ourselves out of the mire of private interest unto the contemplation of virtue, and put a hand unto the removal of this evil from under the sun’.⁷⁹ In this way, Harrington maintains a traditional attachment to the idea that private interests are at bottom a potential danger to virtue and the common good.

Paul Rahe has recently argued that this reference to ‘virtue’ is singular in *Oceana*, and that its singularity demonstrates that Harrington is fundamentally unconcerned with the idea of virtue (in a neo-classical sense).⁸⁰ He goes on to maintain that Harrington does not invest the Archon with virtue so much as calculated self-interest. The suggestion is that the legislator requires that his activities achieve effects of ‘godlike splendour’ and posthumous fame in order to form a just commonwealth.⁸¹ This unique appeal to virtue is therefore not so much intrinsic to Harrington’s political theory as it is a challenge to the sensibilities of his readers, and would have been read as such by those in the know.⁸² I am sympathetic to Rahe’s adherence to vocabulary in judging when and where Harrington is actually discussing virtue. However, the later discussion of the need for the

⁷⁸ See chapter 1 above.

⁷⁹ Harrington 1977, p. 169.

⁸⁰ Rahe 2008, pp. 321-46.

⁸¹ Rahe 2008, p. 335. See also Sullivan 2004, pp. 157-8.

⁸² Rahe 2008, pp. 325-6.

Archon to be patriotic, putting the public interest before his own, surely reflects the same sentiments as the passage concerning virtue.

The claim of Rahe, and others, is that Harrington has moved away from the discussion of virtue entirely, and relies instead on the predictable selfishness (and hence *lack* of virtue) of mankind, as well as the *consciousness* of this selfishness in others, which is harnessed to produce a stable and prosperous republic.⁸³ On the face of it, this appears to reiterate the argument that the republican force of Harrington's writing is in its attention to the need to reconcile particular interests to the common good. But this approach ignores what I have continually tried to stress: that Harrington does this in the context of a much more traditional adherence to the idea that there are common interests we all share, which are the product of a higher reason and thus require individuals to reach for some form of virtue.

Parallel to the rejection of politics as a process in which good comes out of conflict between vying interests comes a rejection of the senate as a particular faction or party against which the interests of 'the people' are to be pitted. Harrington argues that the maintenance of equality and the maintenance of the commonwealth go hand-in-hand:

to make a commonwealth unequal is to divide it into parties, which setteth them at perpetual variance, the one party endeavouring to preserve their eminence and inequality, and the other to attain unto equality, whence the people of Rome derived their perpetual strife with the nobility or senate: but in an equal commonwealth, there can be no more strife than there can be overbalance in equal weights, wherefore the commonwealth of Venice, being that which of all others is the most equal in the constitution, is that wherein there never happened any strife between the senate and the people.⁸⁴

It is thus crucial to my argument that Harrington's notion of the senate is far more Platonic than Machiavellian.⁸⁵ This means that there is no necessary social difference between those who are senators and those who are not, but that those who are, are wiser:

⁸³ Burgess 2007, pp. 369-70; Burgess 2009, p. 355; Holmes 1995, p. 26.

⁸⁴ Harrington 1977, p. 180.

⁸⁵ Cf. Pocock 1992), pp. xv-xvi. See also Nelson 2004, p. 114.

‘A third will be wiser, or at least less foolish, than all the rest.’ Harrington appeals to the authority of Scripture to support the idea that the divine has created certain parts of the community naturally wiser than the others.⁸⁶ He describes this ‘wisdom of the few’ as ‘the light of mankind’, and therefore ‘the council dividing [i.e. proposing different alternatives for the laws of Oceana] consisteth of the wisdom of the commonwealth’.⁸⁷ It is equally important for Harrington to assure his readers that ‘the decrees of the senate are never laws’, but merely recommended options, which the assembly of the people must make law by their (albeit silent) consent. Because ‘the office of the senate is not to be commanders but counsellors of the people’, it is impossible to associate this arrangement with a Machiavellian system in which the participation of the people acts as a barrier to the threat posed by the senate’s potential to impose its will on the rest.⁸⁸ This also chimes with Pocock’s understanding of what for Harrington constitutes the “public interest”. Pocock argues that Harrington saw the public interest as the realisation of ‘a dialogue within the whole’ between ‘the personal experience of the many and the reflective capacity of the few’ mediated by the ‘*ordini* of a republic’.⁸⁹

Thus, Harrington rejects a plurality of interests as a part of politics, on the basis that the promotion of private interests is potentially lethal to stable political community.⁹⁰ The consequence is that the only legitimate interest is that of the whole people:

As the council dividing consisteth of the wisdom of the commonwealth, so the assembly or council choosing should consist of the interest of the commonwealth. As the wisdom of the commonwealth is in the aristocracy, so the interest of the commonwealth is in the whole body of the people.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Harrington 1977, p. 172; Deut. 1.13. Consider also Harrington’s aphorism that ‘a popular assembly without a senate cannot be wise’: Harrington 1977, p. 771.

⁸⁷ Harrington 1977, p. 173.

⁸⁸ Harrington 1977, pp. 172-3. Harrington also makes this point in *The Prerogative of Popular Government* (1658): Harrington 1977, pp. 419-20.

⁸⁹ Pocock 1977, p. 87.

⁹⁰ This would also direct us to reject one commentator’s assertion that Harrington ‘as each assembly represent the interests of one of the two classes of citizens in the commonwealth’: Sullivan 2004, p. 150.

⁹¹ Harrington 1977, p. 173.

Much later in the text, Lord Archon criticises the mythical Romulus for the misguided foundation of Rome: 'By making that of the patrician a distinct and hereditary order' he 'planted the commonwealth on two contrary interests or roots which, shooting forth in time, produced two commonwealths.' While Romulus's actions helped to support his throne in the short term, in a longer view, they led to the destruction of the Roman state.⁹²

For Harrington, the only way to ensure the continuing survival of his commonwealth is to ensure that its foundation consists of just one unitary interest. In this respect he owes much to Hobbes.⁹³ As we have seen, Hobbes had stressed that government based on a mixture of interests was not simply unwise, but fundamentally opposed to the very principle of government in the first place.⁹⁴ Harrington's departure from Hobbes comes with the notion that there can be a mixture of elements in the sovereign decision making process, in which constitutional roles are delineated between the orders. A number of historians have commented that, while Harrington adopts many aspects of Hobbes's project, he believes Hobbes to suffer from a lack of concern with classical history, and thus the classical mixed (or balanced) constitution.⁹⁵ But the idea that these elements or orders participating in the mixed constitution can be said to have different *interests* is continually rejected in Harrington's writings.

⁹² Harrington 1977, p. 272. Cf. Sullivan 2004, p. 157.

⁹³ As well as his ubiquitous references to *Leviathan*, it is clear that Harrington had read Hobbes's *Six Lessons to the Professors of Mathematics* (Harrington 1977, p. 185), published in 1656, and by the time he published *Politicas* in 1659 he had certainly read *De corpore politico* (Harrington 1977, p. 712). See Parkin 2007, p. 180. Harrington also makes reference to Hobbes in his discussion of liberty and necessity in book 1 of *The Prerogative of Popular Government* (1658), which Parkin suggests points to Harrington also having read Hobbes's *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance* (1656), though Pocock finds sufficient precedents in *Leviathan* (Harrington 1977, p. 422). For more on the Hobbesian elements of Harrington's thought, see Fukuda 1997, p. 71; Rahe 2008, pp. 326-31; Scott 1993. Cf. Cotton 1991, ch. 4.

⁹⁴ See chapter 2 above.

⁹⁵ Parkin 2007, p. 182; Scott 2004a, pp. 162-6.

When one recent scholar of the history of interests argues that ‘Harrington’s *Oceana* ... articulated a sophisticated republican interest pluralism’, it is important that we insist on asking what kind of ‘interest pluralism’ is at issue.⁹⁶ From all the evidence I have so far presented, it would be foolish to look for this pluralism in the mechanics of Harrington’s conception of government. Similarly, it would be erroneous to see Harrington’s notion of the ‘public interest’ as simply a conglomeration of private interests.⁹⁷

However, if we take ‘interest pluralism’ to mean that Harrington envisaged a commonwealth which allowed interests to be pursued without endangering the common good, then this is surely true. Harrington argues that ‘the government whereof this nation is capable, once seen, taketh in all interests’.⁹⁸ This comes in the context of his attempt to persuade his readers of the triviality of the divisions they may currently perceive, compared to that which unites them.

First, we should reflect on the uniqueness of the notion of the ‘public’ interest in Harrington’s thought, as distinct from the ‘common’ interest. There has been some discussion in Harrington scholarship of what constitutes the difference between these interests. Charles Blitzer began the debate in his landmark intellectual biography of Harrington in 1960. Blitzer argues:

[Harrington] does not go so far as to say that the spontaneous mass-action of the populace will predictably embody the common interest. But he does wish to discover the constitutional or institutional arrangements that will ascertain this interest through consultation with the people, recognising all the time that when consulted each individual will predictably opt for his private advantage.⁹⁹

Writing ten years later, J. A. W. Gunn makes a different argument. He claims that, for Harrington, the common interest is (by necessity) something which all human beings

⁹⁶ Engelmann 2003, p. 135.

⁹⁷ Cf. Skinner 1998, pp. 28-9. Skinner argues that, for Harrington, the public interest is simply the conglomeration of the various private interests of individuals. Cf. also Cromartie 1998, pp. 1003-4.

⁹⁸ Harrington 1977, p. 205.

⁹⁹ Blitzer 1960, pp. 145-6.

share, and is therefore the original of natural law. Gunn also distinguishes this common interest from the public interest, which he equates with the theory of reason of state.

Gunn argues that common interest ‘was a condition if natural equality imperfectly displayed in the operation of private and state interests’.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, ‘the idea of a common interest of mankind belonged to that part of Harrington’s political thought that was derived from Hooker and Grotius’.¹⁰¹ This notion is recognised by Harrington’s primary interlocutor, Matthew Wren in his *Considerations* of 1657. Having criticised the notion that democracy is the only legitimate form of government, and Harrington’s account of the balance, Wren argues that Harrington’s ‘Argumentation about the Reason or Interest of Mankind is little less infirm’. For Wren, Harrington ‘takes it for granted there is such a common right or Interest ... without proffering any other proof then the Testimonies of *Hooker* and *Grotius*; Whose Opinions cannot oblige us beyond the Reasons on which they are founded’.¹⁰² Wren therefore perceives this notion of common interest to be based on little more than the speculations of natural law theorists, bearing little relation to political reality. Gunn argues that by defining the common interest in such a way, ‘we discover ... what the public interest is not’, and suggests that Harrington’s naivety about the actual operations of legislative assemblies leads to his readers seeing ‘a misleading objectivity to the content of the public interest’.¹⁰³ Therefore Gunn argues that although ‘at the most abstract level of treatment he [Harrington] saw the public interest as a first approximation to the common interest’,¹⁰⁴ there was really a much stronger connection between the public interest and reason of state.¹⁰⁵

But the reality is that Harrington rejected reason of state theory, as he saw it as providing the opportunity for rulers to abuse their power. Indeed, his first political

¹⁰⁰ Gunn 1969, p. 133.

¹⁰¹ Gunn 1969, p. 135.

¹⁰² [Wren] 1657, pp. 20-1.

¹⁰³ Gunn 1969, pp. 139-41.

¹⁰⁴ Gunn 1969, p. 145. See also Cromartie 1998, p. 994.

¹⁰⁵ Gunn 1969, pp. 128-9.

aphorism in his collection of 1659 emphasises that ‘the errors and sufferings of the people are from their governors’.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, there was not such a clear-cut distinction in *Oceana* between common interests and public ones. Early on in *Oceana*, Harrington relates different levels of interest to different levels of reasoning, and thereby gives his account of virtue. He argues that there is ‘a private reason, which is the interest of a private man’, a ‘reason of state, which is the interest (or error, as was said by Solomon) of the ruler or rulers’ and finally, ‘there is the reason that is the interest of mankind or of the whole’.¹⁰⁷ The last of these is that upon which morality and ‘decency’ must be grounded:

Mankind must either be less than the creature, or acknowledge also his common interest to be common right. And if nothing else but interest, and the interest of mankind be the right interest, then the reason of mankind must be right reason. Now compute well, for if the interest of popular government come the nearest unto the interest of mankind, then the reason of popular government must come the nearest unto right reason.¹⁰⁸

In passages such as these, the ultimate content of what constitutes the ‘common’ or ‘public’ interest in which we are all apparently so invested, is highly elusive. Notice that early on in the passage, Harrington rejects the supremacy of the interests of a government which is not popular: he dismisses as ‘error’ the notion that rulers have interests which are in any way more rational than those of the people. In doing this, he challenges figures such as Rohan and Nedham, and to an extent joins with Hobbes in denying any higher wisdom in non-popular sovereigns. However, unlike Hobbes, he maintains that popular sovereignty will produce a higher reason, as it is directed towards a higher end: common interest.¹⁰⁹ In order to understand its substantial content

¹⁰⁶ Harrington 1977, p. 762.

¹⁰⁷ Harrington 1977, p. 171.

¹⁰⁸ Harrington 1977, pp. 171-2.

¹⁰⁹ In the course of arguing this, Harrington dismisses the seemingly Hobbesian objection that men are more easily influenced by their passions than by reason (Harrington 1977, p. 171). Pocock suggests that Harrington’s words here ‘have a Hobbesian flavour’, but Parkin 2007 (p. 180) goes further in arguing that they are a reference to Hobbes’s *Human Nature* (1650).

thoroughly, we need to incorporate another concept that was central to Harrington's thought, and that is *liberty*.

We must take into account what Harrington describes as 'the public interest of liberty', which is everyone's interest, but of which the people rely on the aristocracy to be a constant reminder.¹¹⁰ Harrington is not so much protecting the individual's right to pursue his/her interest, but rather protecting the commonwealth (and thereby the individuals within it) from the corruption of private interest. Liberty is thus seen as a solution to the problem of private interest, rather than *as* the interest of the people (as republicans of the civil war had articulated it).

The solution is to say that 'the perfection of government lieth upon such a libration in the frame of it, that no man or men, in or under it, can have the interest, or, having the interest, can have the power to disturb it with sedition'. Thus, the subduing of private interest is the preserve of the liberty of the republic, as Harrington immediately goes on to show. He argues that monarchies are maintained either by nobilities or armies, and that both leave it open to faction, and both empower various groups to pursue their interests to the detriment of the common good.¹¹¹

Harrington argues that the public interest can exist only in a republic, and (as in the case of the republic), it is clear that the public interest cannot exist without liberty.¹¹² Indeed, there is a sense in which the public interest is *created* by the existence of popular sovereignty:

the balance, swaying from monarchical into popular, abateth the luxury of the nobility and, enriching the people, bringeth the government from a more private unto a more public interest, which, coming nearer, as hath been shown, unto

¹¹⁰ Harrington 1977, p. 183.

¹¹¹ Harrington 1977, p. 179.

¹¹² Harrington 1977, p. 845.

justice and right reason, the people upon a like alteration is so far from such corruption of manners as should render them incapable of a commonwealth, that of necessity they must thereby contract such reformation of manners as will bear no other kind of government.¹¹³

Of course, there are common interests which all men share, such as wealth and security. But it seems clear from the passages in *Oceana* from which I have quoted that the major interest shared by individuals in common, and the public, is that of liberty. Indeed, it is liberty that holds together the fragile coalition of human interests in the necessity of communal life, ensuring through institutional arrangements, that each individual is able to serve their particular interests by serving the common good.

In *The Prerogative of Popular Government* (1658), Harrington makes this institutional manipulation of interests even more explicit. He describes a constitution in which six people are set in a position to debate laws, and fourteen are asked to resolve silently on what is to be done:

If the six [debaters] endeavour to extend the authority which they find thus acquired to power, that is, to bring the fourteen [resolvers] to terms or conditions of obedience, or such as would be advantageous to the few but prejudicial to the many, the fourteen will soon find that, consenting, they hurt not only themselves by endamaging their own interests, but hurt the six also, who by this means come to lose their virtue, and so spoil their debate, which while such advantages are procurable unto themselves will go no farther upon the common good, but their private benefit.¹¹⁴

We can see that, over and over again, Harrington asserts this notion that private interests clash with the common good only when they are allowed free-rein. When they are set up in the appropriate political institutional framework, they can be made to conform and contribute to the common good. Indeed, by 1659 Harrington has constructed the

¹¹³ Harrington 1977, p. 202.

¹¹⁴ Harrington 1977, pp. 416-17.

political aphorism that: ‘a commonwealth or democracy, to be perfect in the form, must consist especially of such an assembly, the result whereof can go upon no interest whatsoever but that only which is the common interest of the whole people’.¹¹⁵

But what exactly are these institutional mechanisms which are to bring interests into conformity with the common good? The most obvious device is that of the division of roles of the senate and the people, with the former proposing alternatives for the latter to decide between in the formulation of laws. Harrington uses the metaphor of two ‘silly girls’ deciding on how to share a cake. One cuts and other decides which piece she will have, and consequently, they end up with equitable halves. But what is interesting here is that Harrington does not necessarily see this (as a thinker such as Nedham would) as being a way in which to accommodate private interests into the common good. Harrington in this passage talks of ‘decency and the common interest’ instead.¹¹⁶ The two institutions of Oceana to which I would rather draw attention are those of the ballot, and of the role of the prytans referred to at the beginning and end of the work.

The ballot is an institution indispensable to the maintenance of equity in the commonwealth and thereby to ensuring that no private or corrupt interests are able to become dominant. Harrington places it alongside the Agrarian Law – which ensures that Oceana will not lose the balance achieved by the proportioning of land among the people – as one of the ‘fundamental laws’ which lie at ‘the centre of this commonwealth’. While the Agrarian Law preserves ‘equality at the root’ of the commonwealth, the ballot ensures that this is reflected in the political superstructure by ‘conveying it into the branch’.¹¹⁷ The Archon gives a lengthy defence of the fourteenth order of the commonwealth, which assigns ‘the ballot of Venice, ... fitted by several alterations, and appointed to every assembly, to be the constant and only way of giving suffrage in this

¹¹⁵ Harrington 1977, p. 770.

¹¹⁶ Harrington 1977, p. 172. This does much to undermine Fukuda’s discussion of the role of individual interests to be played in the resolutions of the people: Fukuda 1997, p. 107.

¹¹⁷ Harrington 1977, p. 231.

commonwealth'.¹¹⁸ In his speech the Archon argues that 'the purity of suffrage in a popular government is the health if not the life of it, seeing the soul is no otherwise breathed into the sovereign power than by the suffrage of the people'.¹¹⁹ He refers to the 'Venetian boxes' of the secret ballot as 'the most sovereign of all remedies against this cogging' of fortune, as well as the private interests of particular groups or individuals.¹²⁰

Harrington stresses that these two devices – the Agrarian Law and the ballot – will continue to operate without the 'props and scaffolds' which he worries 'may have troubled the reader'.¹²¹ The second institutional device I wish to consider, however, is exactly one of these props which Harrington uses in the construction of the fundamental laws of Oceana. This is the council of prytans who, 'sitting in the great hall of Pantheon', act as mediators between the interests of the people and the council of legislators, who sat 'more privately in the palace called Alma'. In order to stress how passionately the multitude would articulate their multifarious interests to the prytans, Harrington describes that 'there was a rail about the table where they sat' so 'that they might not be oppressed by the throng'.¹²² This indicates two lines of thought: firstly it reinforces our suspicion of private and particular interests as a healthy component of politics; secondly, it shows that the people's private interests are to be consulted, though only in the *construction* of the constitution and not in its *operation*.

Following his paraphrase of *The Song of Solomon* at the close of the main body of the text,¹²³ the Archon lays out an 'Epitome of the whole Commonwealth', which acts as a summary of the key principles Harrington has just laid down in such painstaking detail.¹²⁴ Following this, the discussion of the role of the prytans is given a reprisal under the

¹¹⁸ Harrington 1977, p. 241.

¹¹⁹ Harrington 1977, p. 245.

¹²⁰ Harrington 1977, p. 244.

¹²¹ Harrington 1977, p. 231. See also Harrington 1977, p. 337.

¹²² Harrington 1977, pp. 208-9.

¹²³ Harrington 1977, p. 333.

¹²⁴ Harrington 1977, pp. 333-8.

heading of 'LIBERTAS'. They are to be brought back into use in cases in which there remain groups unconvinced by the laws promulgated by the people. In addressing such concerns to the prytans, it is expected that there will be resolution to any inconsistencies in the law, but if this does not occur, they may have to resort to a more fundamental review of the constitution.¹²⁵ Once again, the suggestion is that interests are safeguarded by liberty, and that the commonwealth is also protected from interests, again by liberty. This also refers us to one of the key markers of republican theory, which is that politicians and constitutions remain accountable to the people, even after they have consented to being ruled, and for the law to be subject to change when it does not accord with the will and interests of the people.

This is not necessarily to be taken to mean that people might be able to refer to their interests in special appellant proceedings under the auspices of the constitution of Oceana. Indeed, the Archon speaks of 'occasional committees' which are no less threatened by interests than the senate.¹²⁶ Rather, this points to the idea that occasional recourse may be had to step outside the constitution to redress grievances unforeseen. It might be suggested that it is only once this possibility has been enshrined that the Archon can

have little doubt but experience would show every party their own interest in this government, and that better improved than they could expect from any other; that men's animosities should overbalance their interest for any time was impossible, that humour could never be lasting nor, through the constitution of the government, of any effect at the first charge.¹²⁷

Thus we are brought back to the point I made at the start: that English republican theory (here epitomised by Harrington) argues that interests are to be manipulated into conformity with the common good through the constitution or institutions of the state.

¹²⁵ Harrington 1977, p. 339.

¹²⁶ Harrington 1977, pp. 253-4.

¹²⁷ Harrington 1977, p. 350.

As I stressed at the beginning of this chapter, not all adherents to the Good Old Cause shared Harrington's faith in the ability of institutions and orders in the maintenance of the Commonwealth. Perhaps the strongest argument raised against Harrington's faith in institutions was the one which itself deployed the vocabulary of interests. Like Harrington and Nedham, Henry Stubbe was a vehement defender of the Republican cause when it came under threat at the end of the 1650s. He published a critique of William Prynne's *The Re-publicans and other Spurious Good Old Cause ... Anatomized* in May 1659, and authored *An Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause* four months later.

In the second of these texts, Stubbe argued that an identity of interests maintained by political customs would not be effective. Instead, he maintains, people have to be made to see an identity between their private interests and the common good *before* such institutions would be able to direct them:

A people under orders (and inured to them) convinced of their interest in this, or ignorant of any other *Government*, may be serene and prudent, void of discord as the ... *Switz*, and *Hollanders*, of the dissensions whereof late years in both can give us a testimony: But a people unconvinced of their interest, not unanimous in any common concern, except as *Ephraim* and *Menasseh* were to ruine *Judah*, not instructed in, yea averse from a Republick, that such a people put into orders (in which no over-ruling power must retain them, for they must be their own Army) should be so serene and calme, it is unimaginable.¹²⁸

Stubbe reinforces this argument with a comment on the nature of 'interests' in general. He insists that in order to prevent a citizen army from mutinying, 'notwithstanding their excellent order', it is necessary for the statesman to 'make it in their interest, not to do so'. Even this is not as easy as a thinker like Harrington may claim, argues Stubbe, when we consider that 'men do not pursue what is really their interest, but what seems so to them', and it is clear that he believes that institutions are incapable of achieving this

¹²⁸ Stubbe 1659, sig. **, 3^v-4^r.

without reinforcement.¹²⁹ Following Nedham's style of reasoning for a moment, he finally points out that there are a number of people 'in the present posture of our affaires' who have no 'interest ... to promote a Republic'.¹³⁰ Stubbe is not hereby declaring himself anti-republican, merely addressing his scepticism of Harrington's (perhaps outmoded) faith in orders.

Harrington had clearly considered this problem himself. In his dialogue *Valerius and Publicola* of 1659, Valerius objects that since Harrington's model guarantees liberty not through the supremacy of the people, but through their institutions, it is impossible to see how he intends to prevent the people from restoring the monarchy or limiting freedom of conscience.¹³¹ This is a pertinent question, as Publicola (who is clearly Harrington's mouthpiece in this text) has just admitted that 'in the case of a commonwealth, it is not the people that are trusted, but the orders of the commonwealth'.¹³² But Publicola responds to this question by pointing to the fact that the institutions established to rule the commonwealth will manipulate interests so that people will have no incentive to act in such a way: 'See you not that to do either of these [restore the monarchy or limit freedom of conscience] under such a form must be point blank against their interest?'¹³³

In the final days of Cromwell's protectorate, Harrington responded to criticisms from a number of sources that the theory he had expounded in *Oceana* was utopian and unrealistic, with *Brief Directions showing how a fit and perfect model of Popular Government may be made, found, or understood*. As well as arguing that men's particular interests prevent them from living peaceably without institutions, Harrington accuses those who would advocate

¹²⁹ Stubbe 1659, sig. **, 4v.

¹³⁰ Stubbe 1659, sig. **, 5r.

¹³¹ Harrington 1977, p. 797.

¹³² Harrington 1977, p. 795.

¹³³ Harrington 1977, p. 797.

the rule of the saints of posing as advocates of a general interest, when in reality they merely constitute one party interest among many:

so it is ever, that the humours or interests of predominant parties hold themselves to be national; and that which fitteth them can never fit a nation, nor that which fitteth a nation ever fit them. This in the introduction of government is always the main difficulty.¹³⁴

Like Nedham, Harrington argues that distinct and separate interests should be prevented from posing as the public good, and imposing their idea of the common good on the rest of the state.¹³⁵

But by the closing days of the Commonwealth, Harrington clearly became less confident that others saw it his way. We can detect exasperation in his tone when, in one of his last pamphlets, he at first concedes that ‘if it be according unto the wisdom and the interest of the nation, upon mature debate, that there be a king, let there be a king’. Although he clings to his analysis that, were the people thinking rationally, they would see this to be the case, Harrington is forced to concede that the republicans are losing the rhetorical battle:

In the present case of England, commonwealthsmen may fail through want of art, but royalists must fail through want of matter; the former may miss through impotence, the latter must through impossibility.¹³⁶

Thus, despite the ascendancy of monarchy after 1660, Harrington maintained his belief that the historical reality of the balance meant that it was only a matter of time before his ideal commonwealth would have to be instituted.

¹³⁴ Harrington 1977, p. 590.

¹³⁵ See Nedham 1650, pp. 33, 77-8.

¹³⁶ Harrington 1977, p. 825.

The Restoration and the moralization of interests

I

The previous chapter ended with the imminent failure of the republican experiment in England and, along with it, the return of the Stuart monarchy, which was accomplished in May 1660. In the next chapter, we shall come to see the fate of the republican conception of interests as first articulated by Harrington. But first I need to deal with some of the various developments of the vocabulary of interests following the Restoration, and in particular, its move into religious discourse.

A number of historians and political theorists have commented on the plethora of pamphlets in this period purporting to deal with the ‘Interest of England’.¹ But a closer look reveals that many of these works do not contain much to concern us regarding the position of interests as they relate to the common good, or to duty, and simply seek to expound the authors’ various speculations about European foreign policy in the 1660s through to the 1690s.²

We shall see how this conception of the national interest was deployed as evidence in the struggle to win toleration for dissenting protestant sects. This argument was pursued in a number of different ways. Perhaps the earliest was the attempt to convince the Anglican establishment that Non-conformism was not at all a threat to the common interests of peace and security, and that the political interests of dissent were identical with those of everyone else. Another approach, which continued to emphasise the

¹ Engelmann 2003, ch. 6; Hirst 2007, pp. 401-26; Spurr 2000, ch. 5.

² E.g. [Britaine] 1672; [Defoe] 1694; *The Present and Great Interest of both King and People* 1679; [Nalson] 1682; Penn 1676; *The Present State of Christendome and the Interest of England with a Regard to France* 1677; Temple 1680, pp. 1-44; *The true interest of Christian princes opposed to the false interest lately set a foot in the world translated out of French* 1686; [Villiers] 1672. See also Walter 2011, pp. 129-47. *The true interest of Christian princes opposed to the false interest lately set a foot in the world translated out of French* has been mis-identified as another translation or reprinting of Rohan’s *Interest of Princes*. Although it is certainly not by Rohan, it does contain a number of arguments that could be said to be inherited from the Huguenot leader.

contribution to peace, was to argue that it was in the interest of ‘reason of state’ and that it was the *only* way to ensure state security, since lack of toleration created instability. Finally, it was argued by some that not only would toleration promote peace, but it would also further the strength and glory of the English nation abroad.

Thus it is clear that interests continue to have a crucial role to play in political considerations. But it is in this period that the vocabulary comes to be of importance to theologians, and particularly in their moral concerns. In the final sections of this chapter I shall endeavour to understand the division between puritan dissent and Anglicanism, a dichotomy which I believe has considerable effect on how useful the vocabulary of interests is in the debate over the part human beings have to play in their own salvation. This is an approach that no other study of interests across the seventeenth century has attempted.³

The specific theology of the group of moderate Anglican writers and polemicists, termed ‘latitudinarians’ by some, is the focus of the next section of the chapter. Although the label of ‘latitudinarian’ (as it is used to describe a group who shared a whole ideology) has been questioned in recent scholarship, it is clear that there was a group of moderate churchmen who were in a unique position to re-describe interests in a less condemnatory light for a Christian audience. The puritans denied the value of anything at all worldly, and the High church stalwarts condemned the language of interest largely in order to distance themselves from the accusation of civil religion. But I shall show that the moderates were in a unique position which meant that it was both possible and indeed useful to deploy the language of interest.

The final section of this chapter aims to address the claim, made most forcefully by the moderate Anglican, John Tillotson, that what is in our interest is also our duty. This must be seen in the context of moderate Anglican thought as a whole, and in the context

³ E.g. Gunn 1969, ch. 4.

of Tillotson's other sermons. The innovative claim that interests can be identified with duty also points forward to the protagonist of my final chapter, Joseph Butler, who makes almost exactly the same claim in the early eighteenth century. Butler then expands on the philosophical basis of this claim, with which Tillotson does not seem to be concerned. Tillotson makes no real mention of how the public or common good can be served by the private interests of individuals, whereas this question is a crucial pillar of Butler's argument.⁴

II

An important development in the Restoration period was the emphasis that came to be placed on the common interest of *peace*. In particular, this is important in the writings of those critics of Republicanism, and these writers seem to be influenced by Hobbes. One such critic was Matthew Wren, who wrote in direct response to Harrington's *Oceana*, addressing its republicanism in terms of the vocabulary of interests. Wren, who had been rewarded for his continued loyalty to the Stuart regime by being appointed secretary to Edward Hyde, criticises Harrington for failing to distinguish between the private interest of individuals and the common interest. His accusation is that Harrington's faith in the people to make wise decisions is misguided.

Wren embraces Harrington's claim that will originates from interest, stating: 'if Mr *Harrington* does now think fit to consider that this Will must be moved by Interest, I neither need nor meane to oppose him in it'.⁵ But if this is the case, complains Wren, then how is Harrington to prove that the will of the monarch does not also proceed from a legitimate interest? Recognising that Harrington's argument relies upon the idea that only the people as a whole can act on what is in their interest, Wren poses the

⁴ See chapter 7 below.

⁵ Wren 1659, pp. 8-9.

argument that this is in fact best done by one person. In Hobbesian style, Wren states that ‘the fruits of Justice are the satisfaction and Welfare of the People, and from these flow Publique Peace and Security, which are the Princes first and Greatest Interest’.⁶ The significance of this is that monarchy is much better at establishing the interest of security, which allows the people to follow their other interests in peace.

Thus, we can see that a plank of the monarchist critique of republican theorists, even before the Restoration was complete, was that their attempts to impose their political experiments on England were damaging to its overriding interest of peace (despite the claims of writers such as Harrington to the contrary). In *The Interest of England Stated* (1659), John Fell attacked the interests of the ‘odious’ Protector and the Parliament whose ‘plea of right is so thin, that a sober person would be ashamed to own it’.⁷ The only way in which England can achieve peace is to return Charles II, who not only has the greatest *right* to rule, but, ‘being an hereditary Prince, his private interest must be the same with that of the Nation’.⁸ It seems clear that Fell is reflecting a general conviction that attempts at popular government in the last decade have produced rulers who do not reflect or represent the nation’s interests.

Also writing before the Restoration, the Royal apologist Roger L’Estrange sought to show that the only real interest to be reckoned with is *peace*, and in two addresses to General Monck he claims that England as a republic has failed to live up to the requirements of this interest.⁹ ‘The interest of a people’, he claims in the second address, ‘consists in security and prosperity’.¹⁰ L’Estrange argues that the ‘late Empricks’ of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, have shown them to constitute a ‘fools Paradise’.¹¹ In

⁶ Wren 1659, p. 11.

⁷ [Fell] 1659, p. 7. Cf. Nedham 1659.

⁸ [Fell] 1659, p. 9.

⁹ L’Estrange 1660a; L’Estrange 1660b. The former was published on 20 February and the latter on 17 July 1660.

¹⁰ L’Estrange 1660b, p. 2.

¹¹ L’Estrange 1660b, p. 3.

the first address, he had stressed the importance of seeing England as a mixed monarchy. Having shown that this ‘complied with our Laws and Constitution’, L’Estrange clearly assumes that this will not be enough to convince his audience. So, he then moves on to a consideration of how it is in their *interests* to embrace the return of the monarchy:

For our Interest, briefly (to wave tedious and politick discourses,) certain it is, that our Republick, (were it like to settle) would alarme all our Neighbours, would make our best Allies, our bitterest enemies, and (upon several accounts) probably draw upon us, the united forces of Christendome to crush the *Embrio*. Which (the Nation being so weakened, and divided, as it is,) must evidently endanger our totall oppression, or at least, to bring in the King by Conquest: Besides by what Title shall we pretend to hold *Scotland* and *Ireland*, since that of Descent is now avoided, and Consent we know there is none.¹²

So we see that, to questions of right and entitlement, is added the practical question of how to best maintain England’s security, and L’Estrange argues that this security is incontrovertibly vested in the monarchy.

This interest in peace and security has Hobbesian overtones, but is also reminiscent of Henri de Rohan’s assertion that England’s particular national interest is as the defender of Protestantism in Europe. This national interest in turn required internal peace, and a number of writers used the vocabulary of interests in their debate over how this was best achieved. At the centre of this debate was the question of religious toleration, and the extent to which freedom of religion should be extended to the various protestant sects that had been born in the last twenty-five years. It is almost certainly of significance that Henry Hunt’s translation of *The Interest of Princes and States* was reprinted in its pocket-size form in 1663, since it re-inforced this way of characterizing European foreign policy.

Derek Hirst draws our attention to one aspect of the role played by the vocabulary of interests as framing the debate surrounding toleration in the second half of the seventeenth century, which was when, he argues, ‘a conviction of the vital importance of

¹² L’Estrange 1660a, p. 5.

trade took hold and spread to the very centre of power'.¹³ However, it is important to make two points in relation to Hirst's assertion. Firstly, it is clear that peace was singled out as an interest crucial in its own right and not simply as a condition of trade. Secondly, toleration was important for many reasons, and not merely because it served the interests of peace and prosperity.

Neither is Hirst the first to draw attention to the relationship between the toleration debate and interests. Gunn argues that 'instead of dreary, and frequently inaccurate, lists of precedents, the quest for religious freedom called forth thoughts on the relationship between private wants and public needs, the problem, that is, of the public interest'.¹⁴ Whether or not it was the public interest (a term hardly ever used in the course of Restoration debate) that was at stake, it seems to be a powerful argument that interests were a crucial aspect of the debates surrounding the freedom of religious worship in the second half of the seventeenth century.

On 1 May 1660, four weeks before Charles II's triumphant return to London, his intentions were made clear in a statement read to Parliament. Among other things, the Declaration of Breda promised that the return of the Stuart monarchy would not bring with it new religious persecution:

Because the passion and uncharitableness of the times have produced several opinions in religion, by which men are engaged in parties and animosities against each other (which, when they shall hereafter unite in a freedom of conversation, will be composed or better understood), we do declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matter of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and ... we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament, as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered to us, for the full granting that indulgence.¹⁵

¹³ Hirst 2007, p. 421.

¹⁴ Gunn 1969, p. 153.

¹⁵ Gardiner 1979, p. 466.

This promise of indulgence on the basis of ‘the peace of the kingdom’ is crucial, particularly as a number of political writers at this time insist that peace is the interest to be reckoned with in the state.

An early response, which has been attributed to Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, a favourite of Charles II at the time of the Restoration (though he was later to fall spectacularly out of favour), was entitled *Second Thoughts; or the Case of a Limited Toleration*. In *Second Thoughts* it is argued that attempts to use ‘Motives of Interest or fear’ will simply dispose Nonconformists more towards rebellion and insurrection (in short, civil war) than towards peace and tranquillity.¹⁶ Ultimately, the author argues:

There is but one certain Rule to resolve this, and all Cases of a like Nature: First allowing them to have common Sense, it will evidently follow that if we can make it their Interest to be good Subjects, they will not fail of being so, whoever shall assign any Security, but this, for the People Allegiance, do (in my Opinion) but play with the Wind, and pay us with Words.¹⁷

Thus, he concludes that ‘the great Art and secret of Government is to make it the Peoples Interest to be True and Faithful to their Governours’.¹⁸

Much later, in *A Perswasive to Moderation in Church Dissenters* (1686), the Quaker William Penn parrots Nedham’s famous dictum ‘Interest will not Lye’ in order to promote peace.¹⁹ Penn recognizes it to be a platitude that part of our duty (perhaps even all of our duty) is to serve the common good, but that he also acknowledges that people do not quite so easily associate the common good (or public interest) with their own particular interests:

Men embarked in the same Vessel, seek the safety of the *Whole*, in their *Own*, whatever other Differences they may have. And *Self-Safety* is the highest worldly Security a Prince can have; for tho all *Parties* would rejoyce their own Principles prevailed, yet every one is more solicitous about his own Safety, then the others

¹⁶ [Hyde] [1660?], pp. 3-4.

¹⁷ [Hyde] [1660?], p. 5.

¹⁸ [Hyde] [1660?], p. 6.

¹⁹ [Penn] [1686], sig. A, 1^{r-v}.

Verity. Wherefore it cannot be unwise, by the security of All, to make it the Interest as well as the Duty of All, to advance that of the Publick.²⁰

Thus, for both Clarendon and Penn (one an Anglican, the other a heterodox Christian dissenter), the way to deal with the problem of individual interests as they represent differing religious views is to somehow manipulate the situation in order to create an identity between particular and common interests. We hear echoes of the republican idea, which we encountered in chapter 3 as the need to somehow create an artificial identity between particular interests and the common good.

Some writers cast the problem in the context of trade and economic prosperity. For example, at the opening of *Englands Interest and Improvement* (1663), Samuel Fortrey states that ‘Englands Interest and Improvement consists chiefly in the increase of store and trade’.²¹ He goes on to question the wisdom of tolerance in light of this conclusion, and argues that, ‘though Christians ought not to persecute one another, and that onely for small differences in opinion’, still the effects of disagreement are worse than this persecution.²² Fortrey acknowledges that private interests always have the potential to disrupt the common good, where serving the common good might mean individuals being harmed, and he thus commends monarchy as the only plausible form of government.²³

Writing nearly a decade later, Slingsby Bethel’s focus was also on the interest of trade. He argued that England’s principal interest was in economic security, and his goal was to persuade the king that this was the best policy both for himself and his country: ‘For as self defence is the chief interest of every Creature, Natural or Politick, and as without trade, no Nation can be fomidable, especially at Sea, nor able to maintain a sufficient Naval-guarde, or defend themselves against their powerful Neighbours; so Trade, must

²⁰ [Penn] [1686], sig. A, 1^{r-v}.

²¹ Fortrey 1663, p. 1.

²² Fortrey 1663, p. 9.

²³ Fortrey 1663, pp. 3-4.

be the principal Interest of *England*.²⁴ Having argued that ‘it is the undoubted Interest of his Majesty, to advance and promote Trade, by removing all obstructions, and giving it all manner of encouragement’, Bethel goes on to give fourteen steps that Charles II can take to ameliorate England’s position in this respect.²⁵

Among his proposals sits the radical suggestion that the normal process of parliamentary representation (which pays no attention to differences of training and profession) should be corrected so that trade corporations can ‘choose ... their members for Parliament out of themselves’. Bethel argues that such a reform would ensure that people were elected who actually understood trade, instead of the current ‘Courtiers, Country Gentlemen, or ... Recorders’ who he says ‘will be sure to prefer their particular Interests before that of Trade’.²⁶ Steve Pincus argues that Bethel epitomises the view, which became ubiquitous after the Restoration, that England’s national interest is vested in commerce and trade.²⁷ But as will become clear in the course of this chapter, the discourse on interest can be discussed in just as much detail in isolation from debates about political economy.²⁸

Bethel’s pamphlet was written in large part in response to the anonymous tract *Angliæ Speculum Morale* (1670), later attributed to the Tory Richard Graham, whose moralising tone and Catholic sympathies seemed to undermine the argument for the expansion of trade. Bethel attacks Graham on the grounds that he proposes toleration towards not only protestant sects (which Bethel has already justified as necessary for trade), but the Catholics, who are a threat to this trade.²⁹ Thus, the earlier argument that England’s particular interest is as a stalwart of Protestantism seems to be continued in Bethel’s work, with economic security being the crucial characteristic of the chief defence against

²⁴ [Bethel] 1671, pp. 1-2.

²⁵ [Bethel] 1671, p. 8.

²⁶ [Bethel] 1671, p. 12.

²⁷ Pincus 1998, pp. 705-36; Pincus 2001, pp. 286-7.

²⁸ See also introduction above.

²⁹ [Bethel] 1671, p. 19. Cf. [Graham] 1670.

the perceived threat of the Pope. Thus whilst the extension of 'Liberty of Conscience to all Protestant Nonconformists, is the true Interest of King and Kingdome' for its domestic and international economic benefits, Bethel is insistent that the Catholics (even in their current oppressed state) continue to present a threat to England.³⁰

So it was generally accepted among Protestants that, however one defined the national interest, the Catholics were always out to sabotage it. The more divisive question was clearly the extent to which the men of 'tender consciences' described by Charles II were to be given liberty of conscience. Most seem to take him at his word, and conclude that those dissenters who obey the laws of the land and do not attempt political insurrection are to be tolerated and given liberty to practise Protestant Christianity in the way they see fit. So, for such dissenters, it became crucial to convince the Anglican establishment that they possessed these credentials.

Writers such as John Corbet are aware that in order to convince the public at large that their cause is not pernicious, they will have to show that they have only the common good at heart. This job was not easy, given the amount of scorn that had been poured upon them during the Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Interregnum. In particular, we have seen how bitter was their condemnation by figures such as Marchamont Nedham.³¹ In his most famous work, *The Interest of England in the Matter of Religion* (1660), Corbet admits that at the Restoration, 'the Presbyterians knew their single Interest would not settle the Nation', but also points out that 'the Episcopalians knew as well that their single Interest will prove deficient'.³² Claiming that 'the joyning of Interests draws after it the joyning of hearts', he wants to show his audience the importance of a united Protestant interest, against the various threats to England.³³ Thus, he celebrates the fact that 'our Dread Sovereigne', Charles II, has been restored 'not upon the Interest of any

³⁰ [Bethel] 1671, pp. 16-19.

³¹ See chapters 1 and 3 above.

³² Corbet 1661, pp. 199-200.

³³ Corbet 1661, pp. 200-1.

one Party, though numerous and powerfull, but upon the common Tranquility and Security of this Nation'.³⁴ To this end, Corbet proposes a 'Toleration indulged to the weaker side' because in this course 'lies the true Interest of King and Kingdom'.³⁵ By 'weaker side' here is meant the Presbyterian party, who, Corbet argues, 'have as much Interest in that venerable name' of Protestant, as anyone else.³⁶

It is important in this period that Corbet (and others) emphasise the peacefulness of the Dissenters, and their willingness to operate under political authority. Reacting to the charge that the Presbyterians are 'against the Interest of Civil Magistracy ... that they are giddy, factious, schismatical, domineering', Corbet insists that 'they yield unto the Supream Magistrate a supream political power in all spiritual matters', though they refuse to acknowledge him as 'the Fountain of spiritual power'.³⁷ To concede the latter would be a step too far, Corbet claims, as to do so is to admit that without Christian magistrates, the Church has no authority, which cannot be the case.

Quoting Rohan, Corbet draws our attention to 'two Interests exceeding great and precious', which England should be particularly aware of: Protestantism is one, and the other is the safety of the kingdom. He stresses that both are necessary to secure the 'Universality, or the whole Body'.³⁸ This is in contrast to 'a contracted Interest', which constitutes 'a narrow foundation'.³⁹ It is unlikely here that Corbet is referring directly to economic greatness, since he seems to conceive of trade as one such narrow interest:

To turn aside from this common Interest of the whole body, to those inferiour partial ones, is to set up the trade of Monopolisers, which inevitably brings this mischief, that a few grow rich by impoverishing the Common-wealth, and this inconvenience also to them that follow the trade, that they grow rich upon the

³⁴ Corbet 1661, pp. 25-6.

³⁵ Corbet 1661, p. 27.

³⁶ Corbet 1661, p. 49.

³⁷ Corbet 1661, pp. 51-3.

³⁸ Corbet 1661, pp. 151-2.

³⁹ Corbet 1661, pp. 155.

sudden, but are not secure, because many are oppressed, and more excluded from sharing in the benefit.⁴⁰

Even the commercial interest is too narrow to rally everyone around the common good; only the interest that we all share in peace is sufficient to achieve this.

Again echoing Rohan, Corbet talks of the specific interest of England as the role given to her by God to protect and maintain the Protestant religion against its enemies. He begins by pointing out the natural benefits God has bestowed upon the country. ‘This Island’ has been positioned so that ‘nothing but division within it self can hurt it’. Thus, if the English are able to protect themselves from internal factionalism, ‘the hope of Forreign Enemies will be for ever cut off’, and thus ‘it must needs be the wisdom of this State to smother all dividing Factions, and to abolish all partial Interests, that the common Interest of *England* may be alone exalted’.⁴¹ It seems clear from all that we have seen from Corbet, that England’s “holy cause” continued to be of vital significance.

Roger L’Estrange, who had been rewarded for his loyalty by appointment to the rank of Licenser in 1662, attacked Corbet directly in *Interest Mistaken* (1660), where he argues that all parties will claim that their interest in fact serves the common good.⁴² But really he makes the same point regarding interests; that the common interest we all share in peace is the most important, and he simply believes that Corbet is manipulating this language in order to enslave the rest to Presbyterianism. He claims that Corbet has simply misled his readers: ‘The present state of things, he [Corbet] represents quite other then it is: and raises thence a Political expedience of doing This, or That – of Linking Interests, – never considering, that he Himself Creates that Interest, and gives Affairs the Face of that expedience.’⁴³ Thus, L’Estrange claims to have proved that Presbyterianism is a ‘*Contracted and Dividing Interest*’ and cannot therefore be safely mixed with

⁴⁰ Corbet 1661, pp. 154.

⁴¹ Corbet 1661, pp. 156-7.

⁴² L’Estrange 1661, sig. A, 4^v.

⁴³ L’Estrange 1661, p. 2.

Protestantism.⁴⁴ He declares that the only interest he cares for is that of the people, and therefore appears to argue that peace and security are the only interests that should be reckoned with in politics.⁴⁵

In his *Discourse of the Religion of England* (1667), Corbet repeats his conviction that compromise would instigate peace and stability, since ‘if a Settlement may be found out, which may accommodate all those Parties or Perswasions, in which the Peace of the Nation is bound up, it will prove the undoubted Interest of this State’.⁴⁶ Interestingly, Corbet spends the final four chapters of the work engaging in an exercise we have already encountered, particularly in the work of Marchamont Nedham. Although in his twentieth and ultimate chapter he seeks to show why ‘Latitude of Religion’ promotes the ‘common Security and Freedom’, the three chapters before show why it is beneficial to ‘three Important Interests’, namely, the king, the church and clergy, and the nobility.⁴⁷ His ultimate aim is not merely to show that it is in the collective interest of each group to support his solution, but that the three interests are not mutually incompatible as others have claimed.

The chief critic of the *Discourse of the Religion of England*, Richard Perrinchief, uses Corbet’s specific vocabulary against him. Like L’Estrange, Perrinchief had been a prominent beneficiary of the Restoration of the Anglican establishment in 1661, and had been one of Cromwell’s chief denigrators. In his *Discourse of Toleration* (1668), Perrinchief declares that a tolerant policy is very much *against* the interest of England.⁴⁸ He acknowledges that ‘it is for the Interest of *England* as much as for any other State, to have no *Factions*, nor to permit any thing that may either form or nourish them’, but he denies

⁴⁴ L’Estrange 1661, pp. 139-40.

⁴⁵ L’Estrange 1661, sig. A, 5^{r-v}.

⁴⁶ [Corbet] 1667, sig. A, 2^v.

⁴⁷ [Corbet] 1667, p. 48.

⁴⁸ [Perrinchief] 1668, p. 24.

that toleration will render such factions safe to maintaining peace.⁴⁹ It is crucial, Perrinchief argues, that England is ruled by a 'Rightful' monarch, and suggests that giving too much freedom to dissenters threatens the safety and solidity of the rightful succession of monarchs, since loyalty to any church other than the national one may divide a subjects loyalties.⁵⁰ But he goes further than other critics of toleration in explicitly appealing to the simple-mindedness of the English people, in being unable to discern true religion, and therefore needing protection against the sophistication of the dissenting sects.⁵¹

In his *Second Discourse of the Religion of England*, published in 1668 in response to Perrinchief's criticisms, Corbet argues that it is 'besides the mark' to attack him for advocating 'the Mischiefs of a boundless and licentious Toleration'. He insists that any toleration or 'latitude' extended to dissenters must be 'Limited and well Managed', and based on an 'appropriate interest'.⁵² Again he emphasises in the clearest terms that 'the Protestant Dissenters, are such as do much of the Business of the Nation, and have not their Interest apart, but in strict conjunction with the whole Body-Politick'. He points out that they have no foreign allegiances (unlike the Catholics) and could therefore seek refuge in no other state, and that therefore 'all their Stake lies at home' in England. It is entirely anathema to their interest to promote anything other than peace and harmony.⁵³

Corbet points out that it is really in the best interests of dissenters for the Church of England to comprehend them rather than simply to tolerate them, as long as this would not damage their consciences.⁵⁴ This comes from a rather conservative position, that it is more conducive to the interest of peace to have a united protestant national church, rather than a number of tolerated sects. It is perhaps this that separates Corbet from

⁴⁹ [Perrinchief] 1668, pp. 25-6.

⁵⁰ [Perrinchief] 1668, p. 26.

⁵¹ [Perrinchief] 1668, p. 27.

⁵² [Corbet] 1668, pp. 8-9.

⁵³ [Corbet] 1668, p. 12.

⁵⁴ [Corbet] 1668, pp. 39-42.

more radical writers such as John Owen. Owen comes from a similarly rational position. But, rather than simply showing dissenters to be safe to the stability and security of the English polity, Owen wants to show that tolerance and indulgence to these sects will actively promote not only England's safety and peace, but also her greatness.

Owen had been a supporter of the Rump Parliament throughout the 1650s, though he had fallen short of criticism of the Oliver or Richard Cromwell. Having argued vigorously for toleration throughout this period, Owen was offered an escape for the inevitable persecution which would come after the restoration of the Anglican church; in 1663 he was offered a Congregational ministry in Boston, Massachusetts, and in 1670, the presidency of Harvard, but turned them down. There is a sense in which this refusal of an escape was designed to prove the political point he pursued in his writings: that toleration was not given licence to all sorts of dangerous interests.

In a work of 1667, Owen suggests that the persecution of protestant sects has come as a result of 'the Lusts' and 'the Ignorance of Men, of the genuine nature and tendency of the Truth it self', and that the truth is regularly misrepresented in ways 'which it hath always been the intrest [sic] of the many in the world, to frame and promote'.⁵⁵ In the course of this tract, he argues that differences in men's opinions on the best way to worship God are not only 'insuperable' and 'absolutely unavoidable', but also 'inseparable from the nature of Man'. In referencing the naturalness of difference, Owens also wants to draw our attention to 'that *Harmony* which by an answerableness of one thing unto another, riseth from such Differences, doth the chiefest Glory and Beauty of Civil Society consist'.⁵⁶ Of course, Owen is keen to stress that 'they are *Protestants* only of whom we speak', and we are to infer that he continues to see England's special national interest as being the protector of Protestantism against the Catholic threat: 'We

⁵⁵ [Owen] 1667a, p. 3.

⁵⁶ [Owen] 1667a, pp. 18-19.

have no Principle in the least seducing us to transgress against any of those Laws which in former days were looked on as *safe Preservatives* of the *Protestant Religion and Interest in this Nation*.⁵⁷ But his method for achieving ‘*safe Preservatives*’ is to grant indulgence to dissenters such as himself.

‘We find it indeed still pretended’, Owen states, ‘that the *allowance* of *meeting* for the worship of God, however ordered and bounded, will be a means to procure and further sedition in the Common wealth, and to advantage men in the pursuit of designs to the disturbance of the Kingdom.’⁵⁸ But he assures us that ‘the publick peace will never be hazarded by such designs’, and that ‘Conscience, Interest, sense of obligations, [which are] the only safe rules amongst men to judge by of future events, all plead an expectation of the highest tranquility in the mindes and spirits of men, upon the indulgence desired’.⁵⁹ Thus, Owen characterises liberty of conscience as the only means to a safe and happy populace.

In the same year, Owen produced a tract entitled *Indulgence and Toleration Considered*, in which he self-consciously appealed to the traditional notion of interest in order to persuade his readers that toleration was beneficial. He criticises those who believe that ‘the *Interest of England*’ is uniformity of religious worship, asserting instead that ‘the true Civil Interest of this Nation, in the *Policy, Government, and Laws* thereof, with the *Benefits* and *Advantages* of them, and the *Obedience* that is due unto them, **Every English-man is born into**’.⁶⁰ By stressing that the people of England are somehow ‘born’ into a knowledge of their duty both to the state and to God (a knowledge they can attain by their ‘Natural Reason’) means that it is the ‘Liberty’ and ‘Duty’ of Englishmen to serve both.⁶¹

⁵⁷ [Owen] 1667a, p. 15.

⁵⁸ [Owen] 1667a, p. 36.

⁵⁹ [Owen] 1667a, p. 37.

⁶⁰ [Owen] 1667b, pp. 18-19. Bold emphasis is used in the original.

⁶¹ [Owen] 1667b, pp. 19-20.

Indulgence and Toleration Considered was followed a year later by the second edition of an anonymous tract entitled *Liberty of Conscience upon its true and proper Grounds Asserted and Vindicated*, to which was now added an essay which declared *Liberty of Conscience, the Magistrates Interest*. Having argued in the original discourse that conscience and understanding simply could not be compelled by the threats of punishment and persecution, the author in the new addition to the work is at pains to point out that toleration is in the interest of the state, since ‘the punishing of men meerly for following the pure dictates of Conscience is no doubt the true cause of many National miseries’.⁶²

Again, it is stressed that this toleration is only designed to extend to Protestants; the author continues to accept that it is England’s proper interest to maintain herself as the bulwark of the Reformed religion in Europe. So it is crucial that ‘it is the King of *England’s* true Interest to become the Head of all the *Protestant* party in the World’ but at the same time ‘he will never do that, but by first making himself a common Father to all his *Protestant* Subjects at home’.⁶³ This is a point at which the continued emphasis on “interest” in the discourse on international relations intersects noticeably with the discourse on domestic policy. By the end of the essay, the author claims himself satisfied that ‘we have seen, that not only Religion, but Reason, not only Duty but Interest, do invoke Princes and States in this particular: To whom it may fitly be said in the words of the Psalmist, *Be wise now therefore, O ye Kings; and be instructed, O ye Judges of the Earth*’.⁶⁴ Thus we see that arguments for the toleration of dissenting Protestants came to be cast strongly in the language of interests.

⁶² [Wolseley] 1668, p. 57.

⁶³ [Wolseley] 1668, p. 59.

⁶⁴ [Wolseley] 1668, p. 70.

III

John Owen's most famous work, *Truth and Innocence Vindicated*, appeared in 1669 in reaction to Samuel Parker's *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* of the same year.⁶⁵ Parker was adamantly opposed to the extension of toleration to dissenters, and, unlike Owen, associates interests with atheism, pointing to those who 'Charge Religion with Credulity and easiness of Belief' and who reduce 'the Laws of Nature' to being 'nothing but Maxims and Principles of self-interest'.⁶⁶ In making this argument, he refers explicitly to those who 'swallow down the *Malmsbury Philosophy*, without any chewing or consideration'.⁶⁷ Here is a standard attack upon Hobbes, though as we have seen, it reflects a misunderstanding about Hobbes, that he advocated the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of the interests of the state.

In referring to the dissenters themselves, Parker's accusation is that they put their own interests before the common good:

At the same time they shake hands with Religion, they bid adieu to Loyalty; in that whilst they own no ties of Conscience, they know no honesty but advantage; and Interest is the only endearment of their Duty to their Prince: and therefore, whenever this happens to run counter to their Loyalty, it is then the strongest and most effectual inducement to any attempts of Treason, and Rebellion.⁶⁸

Parker's suggestion is thus that considerations based merely upon interest are not enough, and that effective government has to be able to bind the consciences of its subjects.

Parker has no objection to the dissenters' claims to be peaceful as a result of the shared interest they have with other Protestants, which is peace. Indeed, he admits that 'they may prove good Subjects ... who will be honest when it is their Interest', in the

⁶⁵ The title page says 1670. This cannot be the case, since a number of replies (including Owen's) appear in 1669, which leads Jon Parkin to conclude that this is simply an error. See Parkin 1999, p. 97.

⁶⁶ Parker 1670, pp. xxv-xxvi.

⁶⁷ Parker 1670, p. xxv.

⁶⁸ Parker 1670, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

same way as we would expect such behaviour from ‘Rogues and Out-laws’.⁶⁹ Again, his argument directly targets Hobbes, and the fourth chapter of *The Ecclesiastical Polity* is dedicated to revealing the evil of Hobbes’s doctrine, which is characterised as ‘Founding the Reason of ... Obligation upon meer Self-Interest’.⁷⁰ ‘The sole Fountain of all the Mischiefs and Miseries of the World’, Parker argues, ‘is excess of unreasonable self-love, and neglect of all other interests but our own’.⁷¹ Again, what is designed to constitute an attack on Hobbes seems to mimick much of what he actually says.

Where Parker does seem to refer favourably to interests, is in speaking of the interest of the lone ruler. He argues that rulers have for too long neglected the fact that it is both their ‘Duty and Interest’ to persecute those who do not conform to the national religion.⁷² Indeed, Parker complains that, in the past, ‘Ecclesiastical Laws have been set up only for Scar-crows’ and are ‘established rather for shew and Form sake, than with any design of giving them life’, and he argues that the reason for this is ‘Princes’ have ‘so little ... understood their own Interests in reference to Religion’.⁷³ It is as a result of passages such as this, that it has been widely argued, despite his protestations to the contrary, that Parker was heavily influenced by Hobbes’s Erastianism, and such influence becomes particularly clear in his reply to his critics of 1671, entitled *A Defence and Continuation of the Ecclesiastical Politie*.⁷⁴

Hobbes’s influence is palpable in Parker’s scorn for those ‘few seditious Men’ who pretend to pursue ‘the Cause of God’, while actually looking to their own ‘Interest’.⁷⁵ Such arguments are strongly reminiscent of Hobbes’s attributions of blame to the puritan

⁶⁹ Parker 1670, p. xxxiv. This argument is laboured repeatedly throughout the treatise: see also Parker 1670, pp. 128-34, 141-2.

⁷⁰ Parker 1670, pp. 112-16.

⁷¹ Parker 1670, pp. 122-3.

⁷² Parker 1670, pp. 11, 91.

⁷³ Parker 1670, p. 19.

⁷⁴ Parkin 1999, pp. 96-9. Jacqueline Rose has recently argued that historians lend too much weight to the two texts discussed here, and that a consultation of Parker’s other texts would provide a view by which is not in fact an Erastian (see Rose 2010, pp. 350-75).

⁷⁵ Parker 1671, p. 41.

divines for causing the civil strife of the 1640s.⁷⁶ Jon Parkin argues that Parker follows latitudinarians such as Edward Stillingfleet and Simon Patrick, in arguing that dissenters retained their liberty of conscience, an argument that is palpably Hobbesian.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Parker does not share the (later) latitudinarian conception of interest and its relationship to duty, as he (ironically) shares Hobbes's suspicions about particular interests. Indeed, he continues to associate interest with a lack of concern with the common good, much in the same way as Hobbes, and towards a similar purpose.⁷⁸

The civil authority must be in control of 'all Affairs whatsoever, that concern the Interests of mankind, and the ends of Government'.⁷⁹ And since 'nothing has a stronger influence upon the publick Interests of a Nation, than the well or ill management of Religion', it would appear obvious that the regulation of religious activity belongs squarely to the state.⁸⁰ Parker does admit that, insofar as they do not relate to 'the Common Interest of mankind', the actions of individuals should otherwise be left alone.⁸¹ The only problem for the dissenters, is that Parker assumes that matters of doctrine are in fact of common interest, and so we are not to be left at liberty in its respect. He argues that 'nothing more concerns the Interest of the Civil Magistrate, than to take care, what particular Doctrines of Religion are taught within his Dominions', and that 'it is the Interest of Princes to cherish and propagate such Doctrines among their Subjects, that will make them not only quiet, but useful in the Common-wealth'.⁸² Ignoring the protestations made by the dissenting writers we have encountered, who argue that they share the common interest of peace, Parker assures his readers that 'all

⁷⁶ See chapter 2 above.

⁷⁷ Parkin 1999, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁸ Parker 1671, sig. A, 5^r, pp. 46, 55, 66, 118, 470, 517, 668, 689, 713.

⁷⁹ Parker 1670, p. 27.

⁸⁰ Parker 1670, p. 35.

⁸¹ Parker 1670, p. 94.

⁸² Parker 1670, p. 144.

Sects ever were, and ever will be, fierce and unruly to enlarge their own Interests'.⁸³ The way he puts this later on, is in terms of individuals sacrificing their particular interests to the common good: 'Private Interest must yield to Publick Good, and ... when they cannot stand together, and there is no remedy but one must suffer, it is better certainly that one, or a few, should perish than the whole Community.'⁸⁴ Thus, Parker establishes that it is our duty to discard our private interests in the name of the common good.

Parker's insistence no doubt originates in the further assumption that the inconvenience of toleration sprang from the fact that it allowed the 'Projects' and 'innovation' of dissenters to carry on 'by great multitudes of several Interests and Inclinations', as described by Thomas Tomkins in 1667.⁸⁵ Tomkins argues, in very similar fashion to Parker, that 'the safety of all Governments doth Depend upon This, That it is certainly stronger than each single Person'.⁸⁶ Thus, he warns that once dissenters 'have any one *Phrase*, to know one Another by' and 'any *Setled Place* for their constant Meetings, and a Set and *Known* Company for Them to Meet with; or any Bond whatever, which doth Unite Them', they will become a 'Distinct People' with 'an Interest and Counsels of their own, which the Government is not the Manager of, nor Privy to'.⁸⁷ Thus, Parker's warning against the imprudence of allowing space for the operations of the interests of dissenters was not isolated.

Owen's critique seeks to reply to Parker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* chapter by chapter. He claims not to argue for the liberty to abstain from worship of God, or to act contrary to God's commands. 'Indeed ... once men find themselves at Liberty to practice contrary to what is prescribed unto them in the name and authority of God ... it is not long that

⁸³ Parker 1670, p. 162.

⁸⁴ Parker 1670, p. 220.

⁸⁵ [Tomkins] 1667, p. 28. This text was a reply to [Jenkins] 1667. On the front page Jenkins quotes from Henri de Rohan's *Interest of Princes and States*: 'The Interest of *England* lies in holding a firm Union in it self, and the advancement of the *Protestant Religion*. For *England* is a mighty Animal, which can never die, except it kill it self' (sig. A, 1').

⁸⁶ [Tomkins] 1667, p. 32.

⁸⁷ [Tomkins] 1667, p. 32.

they will retain any regard of him, or Reverence unto Him'.⁸⁸ But, for Owen, the result of this is not that the magistrate has a duty to impose the national religion upon every individual. On the contrary, 'the interest of Kings and Rulers, of all Governments whatever, the good and welfare of private persons, lyes in nothing more, than in preserving the Conscience from being debauched in the conducting principles of it'.⁸⁹ In this passage, Owen goes so far as to suggest that the interest of the civil authority is in 'keeping up its due Respect to the immediate Sovereignty of God'.⁹⁰ It is not appropriate for the civil authority to add conditions of obligation not sanctioned by God's superseding power.

One aspect of Parker's criticism in *Ecclesiastical Polity* is directed against the puritan notion that the requirements of worship can only be legitimately be drawn from the express words of Scripture.⁹¹ Owen argues that when we 'lay aside prejudices, corrupt interests, and passions', we shall see that this view 'will not seem to be forraign, unto what is in a hundred places declared and taught in the Scripture'.⁹² His point is that those such as Parker, who would 'have a mind to pare this generally avowed Principle, to curb it, and order it so by distinctions and restrictions' must be out to make it 'serve their turn, and consist with their interest'.⁹³ Owen argues that adding conditions to religious worship that are products of the state rather than dictates of Scripture, and therefore in 'no way naturally related unto the Actions wherewith prescribed Worship is to be performed', is to 'erect a notion of things which nothing but interest can digest and conduct'.⁹⁴ He objects that 'arbitrary Fictions of Ends of Government, and what is necessary thereunto, influenced by present Interest, and arising from circumstances confined to one Place,

⁸⁸ [Owen] 1669, p. 69.

⁸⁹ [Owen] 1669, p. 69.

⁹⁰ [Owen] 1669, p. 69.

⁹¹ Parker 1670, ch. 6.

⁹² [Owen] 1669, p. 303.

⁹³ [Owen] 1669, p. 310.

⁹⁴ [Owen] 1669, p. 355.

'Time, or Nation, are not to be imposed on the Nature of Government itself'.⁹⁵ Owen thus accuses Parker of casuistically basing a conclusion about the nature of government upon a single example or instance, in which one particular interest was involved.

In the conclusion to his reply, Owen suggests that he can provide reasons that more strongly appeal to the interests of the Anglicans among his readers than Parker. He claims that he 'can mind them of Advice, which is ten thousand times more their Interest to attend unto, than to any that is tendred in the Treatise we have had under consideration', and he points to the Psalms to support his case.⁹⁶ Those who have 'judged it their duty and interest, to destroy them that do dissent from them' are therefore those that have 'turned *Christendome* into a Shambles'.⁹⁷ Thus, in the hands of the civil magistrate, a false conception of what is in 'their [own] duty and interest' can be harmful.

It might be suggested that the polemic of the nonconformists, having embraced interests at an early stage, was now much more suspicious of the vocabulary as it came to be used by writers such as Parker to persuade certain sections of the community that it was their 'Duty and Interest' to oppress another part of the community in the name of peace.

IV

Perhaps the most prolific Non-conformist writer of the Restoration was Richard Baxter (1615-1691), who appears at first sight to be making the same point as Corbet and (early) Owen: that religious dissenters are just as capable of conforming to the peace of the kingdom as their Anglican equivalents. Unfortunately, he was unable to vest as much faith in the ability of the interest we have in peace, since even peace is ultimately a

⁹⁵ [Owen] 1669, pp. 93-4.

⁹⁶ [Owen] 1669, p. 391. Cf. Psalm 2. 10-12.

⁹⁷ [Owen] 1669, p. 407.

subjective concept. Baxter claimed to have taken neither side during the civil war, stating in his autobiography that neither could have been justified in taking up arms against the other.⁹⁸ Indeed, by a mere glance at Baxter's output, we can see that his overriding concern is to come to terms with the interest of peace.

Baxter produced his first *Plea for Peace* in 1679, claiming in the strongest terms that 'we are thus far prepared for peace' and that 'if we did *but know* which is the true way of *Love, Peace* and *Concord*, we would follow it: and if we *knew* what is Schism indeed, we would avoid it'.⁹⁹ In the opening to the work, Baxter addresses 'the Reverend Conforming Clergy', and points out to them that the division of interests that was effected when, in 1662, 'neer two thousand Ministers of Christ were by Law forbidden the exercise of their Office, unless they did conform to Subscriptions, Covenants, Declarations and Practices'.¹⁰⁰ The consequent 'destroying of Love and Concord, and of mens souls, weakning the Land, encouraging Popery, Heresie and Schism', has, Baxter argues, 'increased contrariety' rather than unity.¹⁰¹

Where interests are mentioned in Baxter's *Plea*, it is most often in an attempt to persuade his readers that they should avoid their own interest, since it is likely to conflict with the common good (at one point he refers to the 'publick interest').¹⁰² In this pursuit, he speaks again directly to the conforming clergy, accusing them of conforming merely to serve their 'own ends and interests', an activity which 'is more suitable to Atheists than sincere Christians', and is actually more dangerous to political power than nonconformity.¹⁰³ Thus, Baxter's argument was similar to the nonconformists who had proceeded him, in the argument that the political loyalty of nonconformity was just as strong as among Anglicans, the only difference being that he was much more skeptical

⁹⁸ See Baxter 1696.

⁹⁹ Baxter 1679, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Baxter 1679, sig. A, 3^r.

¹⁰¹ Baxter 1679, sig. A, 3^{r-v}.

¹⁰² Baxter 1679, p. 103.

¹⁰³ Baxter 1679, p. 221. The same point is made later in the text: Baxter 1679, p. 339.

about the power of interests in this argument. And the following year, the sequel to this work was to make this argument again, and back it up with substantial philosophical engagement.

Baxter was unhappy with the *The Second Part of the Nonconformists Pleas for Peace*, which appeared in 1680, and was essentially a rough mashing together of various earlier writings.¹⁰⁴ The haphazard appearance of the book is evidence of this. But there are certain parts of this volume that are very revealing of the view Baxter took on political obligation. Again, he shows himself to be sympathetic to the plight of rulers, and attacks those who seek to create civil disruption:

We have no reason to blame our Rulers, for being offended with all principles of Anarchy and Rebellion, and being jealously watchful against all real appearances of them: for that *such are among us*, and that the tendency of them is to pernicious effects, is past denial: and all lovers of God, their Country and their King, will hate and oppose them, when they do discern them.¹⁰⁵

In a similar way to Corbet, Baxter seeks to show that the interest of the rational (and perhaps he intends to mean *moderate*) non-conformist is to maintain peace and the duty of political obligation. He feigns incredulity that he encounters so many attacks on ‘the truly Loyal *Nonconformists*’, when the true villains are ‘the Bruitists that are for *Hobbes, Spinoza, Pomponatius, Vaninus, etc.*’, whose ‘principles are so pernicious, subverting humanity, morality and Government, that I will begin with the recital of them as *Spinoza* layeth them down, and then add the true fundamentals of Government and morality which confute them’.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, Baxter begins by laying out Spinoza’s views, and in particular focuses on the *Theological-Political Treatise*. This text originally appeared in Latin in 1670, but was not fully translated into English until 1689. So we can be fairly sure that the English extracts which appear in Baxter’s text are his own translations from the Latin. This is made more

¹⁰⁴ Keeble 1982, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Baxter 1680, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Baxter 1680, p. 2.

certain by the fact that Baxter's translation uses the vocabulary of "interest" where it is absent in the 1689 translation.¹⁰⁷

Baxter is most keen to draw our attention to the fact that, in his introductory chapter on government, Spinoza claims that any contract which is not for our 'rational benefit' has to be rendered void.¹⁰⁸ In Baxter's interpretation, Spinoza argues for the idea that 'there is no injury but in a Civil Life ... and that all things are lawful to them that are strongest', thereby 'taking off all obligations of charity, justice and common honesty, except what mens *private interest*, or the will of him that is strongest doth infer'.¹⁰⁹ Baxter of course takes an equally hard line on Spinoza's pantheism.¹¹⁰ It is vital for Baxter that God is not merely reflected in nature, but is an active agent in human life, and therefore one who is able not only to provide particular legislation to guide men's actions, but also to decide who shall be saved, and who not. To deny this voluntary divine will is, for Baxter, to deny the fundamentals of religion itself, since it denies that there is a particular Christian truth that God has *revealed* to mankind.

Baxter is absolutely aware of the sway that interests hold over both society and the individuals within it, especially those that attack religion, and he argues that once the 'great secular and personal interests stand up in any Nation against serious Christianity', in such cases 'Arguments and Innocency then signifie nothing' and 'the faithful must patiently wait in suffering, till the righteous God shall plead their cause'.¹¹¹ In this case, Baxter does not follow the dictum that peace constitutes an overriding interest. Rather,

¹⁰⁷ [Spinoza] 1689. A translation of chapter 6, "On Miracles", was published in [Blount] 1683.

¹⁰⁸ [Spinoza] 1925, p. 192: 'Ex quibus concludimus pactum nullam vim habere posse, nisi ratione utilitatis, qua sublata pactum simul tollitur, & irritum manet.' Cf. [Spinoza] 2007, p. 199: 'We conclude from this that any agreement can have force only if it is in our interest, and when it is not in our interest, the agreement fails and remains void.' The original Latin also has 'utilitatis' in the following sentence, which Silverthorne and Israel translate as 'gain', rather than 'interest'.

¹⁰⁹ Baxter 1680, pp. 4-5. Italics my own.

¹¹⁰ See Baxter 1680, p. 9.

¹¹¹ Baxter 1680, p. 204.

dissenters must suffer, and rely upon God's agency to protect them against secularising interests. There is nothing man can do to ensure his own happiness.

In *The Judgment of the Non-conformists about the Difference between Grace and Morality* (1676), Baxter puts it like this: 'Distinct *Parties* have their distinct *Interests*, as to *Commodity* and *Reputation*.' This is, so far, a very familiar formulation. But it immediately appears that Baxter does not consider this interest a mere physical thing at which we aim for our good, but a whole moral system: 'Alas! what work will *selfishness* and *fleshy interest* make? What *Moralities*, what *Untruths*, *Injustice*, and *Unmercifulness* is it pregnant with?'¹¹² The chief significance of this is to show that only grace has the sufficient stability to truly promote both peace and salvation; the difference interests – and thereby the different *moralities* – of individuals are simply too unwieldy and unpredictable, and do not rely on God in the same way as grace.

Baxter appears to identify the same objection to *peace* as he does for *morality*. In *The Second Plea*, he states clearly that 'Every mans own welfare and peace is his own interest. Therefore every man is for his own peace.'¹¹³ The only problem with this is that individuals will try to impose their version of peace on others, and the reasons for this he cites as 'a wicked and selfish heart' and the 'Impossible Terms' which are posited by both sides.¹¹⁴ Thus, holding an interest in peace to be common among men and women, even when limited to those living in the same state, is highly problematic, and not enough to *maintain* peace. Instead, men have to turn away from that selfishness in their hearts, which proceeds from 'the Carnal vicious inclination and interest of wicked men, and the unchangeable enmity of the word and way of God to such inclinations and interest'.¹¹⁵ It has become clear that, as well as a healthy scepticism of the power of individual interests

¹¹² Baxter 1676, p. 3.

¹¹³ Baxter 1680, p. 149.

¹¹⁴ Baxter 1680, p. 150.

¹¹⁵ Baxter 1680, p. 151.

to secure universal peace, Baxter's suspicion of interests was based on a theology dismissive of everything that is of *this* world.

V

It is important to stress that the division between Puritans and Anglicans was not only political, but also theological, and that the disagreement over what is required to gain salvation was articulated to some extent in the vocabulary of interests. 'Interests', it will turn out, were only really useful to those on one side of the debate. In this section I will show that it was not really possible for Puritans of the particularly Calvinist variety to use the vocabulary in any meaningful sense: when only God's grace could bring about an individual's salvation, it made no sense to talk about human interests as having any importance at all. Instead, it fell to Anglicans, whose greater emphasis on worldly values allowed them to give a more plausible position to interests.

This point is illustrated quite neatly by John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), in the various sections dealing with the clash between this-worldly and godly values. Bunyan's protagonist, Christian, is called at the beginning to the 'yonder *Wicket Gate*', a metaphorical entrance into the way of salvation.¹¹⁶ But on his way to this gate, Christian is waylaid by the uncertainty of his mission, and instead of retaining faith he turns from his path and seeks the counsel of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, who is keen to emphasise the 'Wearisomness, Painfulness, Hunger, Perils, Nakedness, Sword, Lions, Dragons, Darkness' that Christian is likely to encounter on such a journey.¹¹⁷ Worldly-Wiseman suggests an alternative course that Christian might take, a course clearly emblematic of the moderate Anglican approach, which emphasised the importance of works and man's co-operation in his own salvation. He indicates to Christian the 'yonder Village', which is

¹¹⁶ Bunyan 2003, pp. 11-13.

¹¹⁷ Bunyan 2003, p. 19.

named 'Morality', where he can find 'a Gentleman, whose name is *Legality*, a very judicious man', who (along with his son, 'Civility') can rid him of his 'burden' of sin.¹¹⁸

Ultimately, Christian is deterred from this by the character of Evangelist, who is constantly there to keep him on his true path.

Evangelist scorns the promise that man can be saved by acting in a certain way, revealing to Christian that 'Mr. *Worldly-Wiseman* is an alien, and Mr. *Legality* is a cheat' and reminding him that 'ye cannot be justified by the Works of the Law'.¹¹⁹ Rather than easing his burden, conforming to the laws is in fact enslaving to those who believe they can be saved by them:

When Christians unto carnal Men give ear,
Out of their way they go, and pay for it dear,
For Master *Worldly-Wiseman* can but shew
A Saint the way to Bondage and to Woe.¹²⁰

Crucially, the way to salvation cannot be through the hope that God will be pleased with our actions in this world. Later, Moses, the representative of the law is said to 'spareth none' and is unable to 'shew mercy to those that transgress his law'.¹²¹ The course of action which is condescendingly referred to as "moralism" – or the idea that leading a virtuous life here on Earth would somehow contribute to salvation – was seen by puritans as a dangerous denial of the omnipotence of God; if man was able effectively to choose himself for salvation, then what role did this leave for divine agency?

In the course of his journey, Christian and his companion Faithful come to Vanity Fair, where anything (including 'Honours, Preferments, Titles, Countreys, Kingdoms, Lusts, Pleasures ... Whores, Bauds, Wives, Husbands, Children, Masters, Servants') can be bought and sold, and where they are eventually put on trial for disturbing the trade of

¹¹⁸ Bunyan 2003, pp. 19-20.

¹¹⁹ Bunyan 2003, p. 24.

¹²⁰ Bunyan 2003, p. 21.

¹²¹ Bunyan 2003, p. 71.

the town.¹²² Christian manages to escape, but Faithful is convicted and sickeningly executed.¹²³ Christian eulogises Faithful, exclaiming that although his worldly existence has come to an end, his martyrdom will mean that he will ‘live from Age to Age’.¹²⁴

Bunyan does not use the vocabulary of interests, and his type of religious writing does not seem to have the same scope in which to deploy it in its discourse. Those who dwell in Vanity Fair are ‘the men of this World’, and not the next, and their worldly concerns had no place in the scheme of ‘the Heavenly *Jerusalem*’.¹²⁵ The people of Vanity Fair beat Christian and Faithful and place them both in chains, but this only serves to make them ‘yet more wisely’.¹²⁶ As Bunyan sees it, Faithful ‘died to make Testimony to the Truth’.¹²⁷ The claim being made by such writers as Bunyan is that their temporal suffering serves as yet further evidence that they have been predestined for greatness in the world to come.

Although it often gave further fuel to their opponents, a number of Anglican writers seem to counter this claim by stressing that religion and piety is in fact in our interests in this world as well as in the next. One of the most common claims was that temporal happiness was to be considered an important effect of holiness. In a sermon of 1669, Edward Stillingfleet stresses that although we cannot be perfectly happy in this world, still ‘some can be more happy than others are, *i.e.* they may enjoy far greater contentment of mind in any condition than others can’.¹²⁸ Three years later, Stillingfleet delivered a sermon in which he argues that worldly gain cannot make up for the loss of eternal life: ‘the gain of this World brings but an imaginary happiness’, he argues, whereas ‘the loss of

¹²² Bunyan 2003, pp. 86, 90.

¹²³ Bunyan 2003, p. 95.

¹²⁴ Bunyan 2003, pp. 95-6.

¹²⁵ Bunyan 2003, pp. 87-8.

¹²⁶ Bunyan 2003, pp. 88-90.

¹²⁷ Bunyan 2003, p. 97.

¹²⁸ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 133. Consider also Stillingfleet’s (undated) sermon upon “Tranquillity and Peace of Mind” (vol. 1, pp. 586-601).

the soul' brings 'a most real misery'.¹²⁹ We can infer that there is a real worldly happiness, which only truly moral action can achieve, and to which sin is lethal.

This all served to undermine the claim that the suffering of the dissenter was evidence of his election to a state of eternal salvation.¹³⁰ Indeed, the rejection of this claim is one of the distinguishing features of a group of Anglican writers who will be the subjects of the final sections of this chapter. Perhaps the most important group of writers we will study from this period are the so-called latitudinarians. This is a label applied to a particular group of Anglicans after the Restoration, referring to their supposed latitude in conforming during the Protectorate *and* following the return of the monarchy. They are also associated with latitude in terms of wanting to expand the Church of England to comprehend within it moderate, rational nonconformists.

VI

One aspect of the thought of those to whom the label 'latitudinarian' has been applied was an acceptance that men are largely influenced and motivated by what is in their worldly interest. Famously, Edward Stillingfleet claimed that 'it is not worth, but power, not speculation but interest that rules the world'.¹³¹ Similarly, Isaac Barrow admitted that 'men are apt to entertain prejudices favourable to their natural appetites, and humours; to their lusts, to their present interests'.¹³² In his earliest published sermon, John Tillotson warns:

He, that doth not consider, how apt every man is unequally to favour himself, doth not know the littleness and narrowness of human nature. We are near to ourselves, and our own interest is near to us, and we see it in its full proportions, and with all possible advantages. Other men and their interests are at a distance from us, and seem less to us than they are. Now we must make abatements for this, according to that experience, which we have had of our own mistakes; which if we will observe,

¹²⁹ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 172.

¹³⁰ See Rivers 1991, ch. 2.

¹³¹ Stillingfleet 1662, p. 471.

¹³² Barrow 1967, p. 382.

as we pass from one condition to another, we may easily be convinced, how great many times they are.¹³³

However, it is important to stress that this idea is not comforting for these thinkers. Indeed, they see it as potentially one of the greatest dangers to religion, as Stillingfleet points out in a sermon of February 1672: ‘Men are never so willing to be cheated by any Religion, as that which complies with their present interests and gratifies their sensual inclinations’.¹³⁴

Their most fundamental philosophical distinction is supposedly their attachment to reason and rational religion, and this is a key trait that Isabel Rivers focuses on in her chapter dedicated to the ‘latitude-men’, as she describes them. They are opposed to atheism, enthusiasm and superstition, all of which they see as self-supporting, and as opponents to reason.¹³⁵ They are keen to monitor the use of language, and see their opponents (both High-Church and dissenting) as corrupting language to serve their non-rational ends.¹³⁶

With this rationalist approach and concern with language came the recognition of the importance of the right *style* of sermonising, and this is reflected upon in a number of treatises. Rivers argues that this involved directing the content of sermons towards a demonstration that the demands being made by religion were supportive of man’s worldly interests.¹³⁷ In other words, it was important to show that hearing their preaching was relevant to their everyday lives. These ‘men of latitude’ are also associated with the ‘New Science’, and with the new style of philosophy which was considered to come with

¹³³ Tillotson 1752, vol. 1, p. cxxxi.

¹³⁴ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 160.

¹³⁵ Rivers 1991, p. 34.

¹³⁶ Rivers 1991, p. 55-6.

¹³⁷ Rivers 1991, p. 58-9.

it.¹³⁸ For these reasons, they were scorned by their opponents for the merely ‘moral’ content of their doctrine and preaching.

Indeed, there are moments when Anglican writers seem to elevate morality above faith in God. In his defensive work, *The Principle and Practices, of certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England* (1670), Edward Fowler constructs a dialogue between the characters of Philalethes and Theophilus, which are clearly designed to represent philosophy on the one hand and theology on the other. In the early stages of the text, Fowler seeks to show his audience that these two characters are not the polar opposites, as was commonly assumed, but that, as Theophilus puts it, although ‘our souls are as distinct as other folks; yet they’ are ‘conjoynd by the same principles and interest’.¹³⁹ Although it is acknowledged that Philalethes is ‘the more open-breasted’ and Theophilus is generally the one providing the wisdom, the two characters (and the disciplines they represent) are shown to be mutually supporting.¹⁴⁰

Fowler spent much of the 1660s and 1670s attempting to forge relationships across denominational divisions. He was friends with the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, and followed his emphasis on rationality. For Fowler, and rationalists in general, the notion that you might be elected and not either confirm or complete this with good works is irrational: ‘To say that God can pronounce a person just and righteous, that is unjust and unrighteous, is the greatest contradiction imaginable to his *own* justice, his *own* righteousness’.¹⁴¹ But Anglicans were always keen to stress that grace was just as important in their theology.¹⁴² Fowler himself describes his solution as a ‘middle’ way

¹³⁸ See [Patrick?] 1662, pp. 14-24. The author is said to be ‘S. P.’, who is usually taken to be Simon Patrick, but this attribution has been challenged: Spurr 1988, p. 70.

¹³⁹ [Fowler] 1670, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ [Fowler] 1670, pp. 3-4. See also [Fowler] 1670, p. 217.

¹⁴¹ [Fowler] 1670, p. 142.

¹⁴² [Fowler] 1670, p. 227.

between the orthodox Calvinists on the one extreme and Ranters and Socinians on the other.¹⁴³

In *The Design of Christianity*, composed a year later than *Principles and Practices*, Fowler makes much more of an effort to distance himself from a natural theology. Having shown that non-Christians could conceive of rewards and punishments in a life after death, it was only with the revelation contained in Christ's Gospel that men and women could be *certain* of such. As Fowler points out, 'the excellent *Socrates* himself, when he was going to drink off the fatal drug ... said to those that were then present with him, I am now going to end my days, whereas your lives will be prolonged; but whether you or I upon this account are the more happy, is known to none but God only'.¹⁴⁴ Thanks to the testimony of God in the Gospel, Christians can be *certain* that there exists a better place after death.

Bunyan attacked *The Design*, claiming to defend his conviction that faith is the only true basis of salvation. He is outraged by Fowler's apparent claim that human beings are able somehow to redeem themselves, which equates human and divine actions: 'Human and divine righteousness are different things, and that 'by which a man must stand just in the sight of God from the curse, is not to be found in men, nor in the Law, but in him, and him onely, who is greater, and also, *without the Law*'.¹⁴⁵ He attacks the latitudinarian position for its emphasis on moral righteousness rather than the imputed 'Righteousness of Christ'.¹⁴⁶

Stepping in as the voice of reason and moderation, Baxter argues that the very language of morality has been 'made ambiguous by the loose and various uses of men', and that 'they that will needs take the word in any narrower private sense, prepare for

¹⁴³ [Fowler] 1670, pp. 228-9.

¹⁴⁴ Fowler 1671, pp. 140-2.

¹⁴⁵ Bunyan 1672, p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Bunyan 1672, p. 86.

quarrels'.¹⁴⁷ The only the difference is that Baxter wants to protect against the idea that God is indistinguishable from God's works – as we have already encountered in his engagement with Spinoza – since 'GOD is his own *End*'.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, love of God must be distinguished from love of what God does: 'the Object of Holiness, Primary, Immediate and proper is GOD himself. The secondary and remoter Object, is the Impressions, Image or Glory of God in his works'.¹⁴⁹ Again, the emphasis for Baxter has to be upon the agency of God and the fact that man cannot be seen as acting alone in his own salvation.

Rather than *either* works *or* election being the key to salvation, the moderate Anglicans are keen to stress that both must be co-ordinate in order for man to be saved.¹⁵⁰ It is this co-ordination between grace and works that becomes an essential of the moderate Anglican theology with which we are dealing. Thus, as John Spurr has recently been at pains to point out, the Anglican notion of morality and pious living is far from straightforwardly 'complacent and prudential'. It was stringently ascetic, and in no way indulged worldly concerns.¹⁵¹

VII

Spurr has questioned the extent to which it is any longer acceptable to speak of the Latitudinarians as a group at all. He argues that the term 'latitudinarian' never lost its connotations as a negative slur against opponents of the high church (and was just as likely to be used against nonconformists as against moderate Anglican divines).¹⁵² Since their programme of new scientific developments and moralising was shared by a number of other Anglicans (namely George Bull, William Sherlock, Robert South and Samuel

¹⁴⁷ Baxter 1671, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁸ Baxter 1671, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ Baxter 1671, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ [Fowler] 1672, p. 37. See also: [Fowler] 1670, pp. 163-4.

¹⁵¹ Spurr 1991, 297.

¹⁵² Spurr 1988, p. 67.

Parker) who were not given this particular condescending title, he suggests it is unwise to continue to group them in this arbitrary fashion.¹⁵³

The charge that those who decided to conform in the Restoration, was one which singled out moderate churchmen (those with some sympathy for dissenters) as self-interested, and as valuing their own worldly happiness or comfort over their duty as Christians. On the other side, hard-line Anglicans viewed nonconformists as dangerous to the stability of the natural hierarchy. In *The Conforming Non-Conformist and the Non-conforming Conformist* (1680), a work designed to cool such tensions, John Cheyney observes:

The Conformist is thought to be a Temporizer, a carnal man-pleaser, a Formalist, a man that will say and swear any thing for a good Living, of a loose conscience, whose Religion is worldly honour, ease, or interest. The Non-conformist is thought to be seditious, unpeaceable, factious, schismatical, causelesly disobedient to lawful Authority, and a contemner thereof, and a breaker of lawful Orders, and a worthy to be silenced, imprisoned, anathematized, and used as intolerable.¹⁵⁴

In a less balanced portrayal, Fowler states that just ‘as we have seen children make an ugly picture upon a wall, and then spit at it’, so the moderate conformists have been ‘characterised as people, whose onely Religion it is to temporise, and transform themselves into any Shape for their Secular interests’.¹⁵⁵

Of course, the accusation was capable of being thrown back at the dissenters. One of the weak points of many of the Nonconformists was their reliance on individual preachers of peculiar charisma and rhetorical ability. Thus, high churchmen such as Richard Hollingworth were able to make the charge that particular sects only followed their leaders because they served a transient and corrupt interest:

I have known several, who so long as Interest or Acquaintance, or any thing else of equal influence, hath kept up their kindness or affection to any publick Preacher, they have followed him with greediness, heard him with attention, and praised him

¹⁵³ Spurr 1988, pp. 81-2.

¹⁵⁴ [Cheyney] 1680, sig. A, 4^r.

¹⁵⁵ [Fowler] 1670, pp. 8-11.

to excess; and their minds never received greater advantage nor their Affections a more vigorous warmth, than under such a Person's Ministry.¹⁵⁶

Thus, dissenters were also accused of pursuing their own interests in separating themselves from the Restoration establishment.¹⁵⁷

For his part, Fowler associates this more with reputation than with material gain. 'Let these men print or preach what they list', his mouthpiece Theophilus says dismissively, 'I am shrewdly tempted much to question, whether they so much declare their *own* thoughts, as what they would have their *people* think; it being their great interest, that [they] themselves should be reputed the onely men that have not shipwrackt faith and good conscience'.¹⁵⁸ Thus, for Fowler it is just as possible for puritans to ruin their consciences by a failure to live the truly pious life, and in this respect, their interest is condemned as damaging and corrupting.

The most important point I want to make about the moderate churchmen of the Restoration and beyond is that they were best placed to make innovations in the way in which the vocabulary of interest was used in both moral and political discourse. But, as is becoming clear, this potentially positive appropriation of the vocabulary of 'interest' was by no means embraced by all Anglicans. Reading Richard Allestree's *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety* (1667), we find 'interest' associated with 'covetousness',¹⁵⁹ and described as 'the great *Idol* to which the world bows'.¹⁶⁰

In his sermon on the eve of Restoration in July 1659, entitled "Interest Deposed, and Truth Restored", Robert South strikes out against not only those who would put interest before duty, but those who have any consideration for interest at all: 'None ever

¹⁵⁶ Hollingworth 1676, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵⁷ E.g. Hollingworth 1676, sig. b, 5^{r-v}, pp. 13-14, 64-5, 92; [Long] 1677, pp. 47-8, 62.

¹⁵⁸ [Fowler] 1670, pp. 31-2.

¹⁵⁹ [Allestree] 1667, p. 354. Allestree is most famous for his (apparent/suspected) authorship of *The Whole Duty of Man* (1659), which was branded as the text for all Anglicans to read in the second half of the seventeenth century. He speaks of 'covetousness' in *The Whole Duty*, though without reference to 'interests' ([Allestree] 1659, pp. 161-2).

¹⁶⁰ [Allestree] 1667, pp. 351-2.

renounced the Interest of Self, but from a prevailing love to the Interest of Christ'.¹⁶¹ In this statement, South echoes the comment by the Cambridge philosopher, John Smith, whose *Select Discourses* appeared posthumously in 1660. Smith had stated that 'by *Self-denial* I mean, the Soul's quitting all its own interest in it self'.¹⁶² In one passage, South suggests that sometimes interests can appear to serve our duty (and *vice versa*?), but this only occurs as a kind of chimera or mirage:

Sometimes Providence casts things so, that truth and interest lie the same way: and, when it is wrapt up in this covering, men can be content to follow it, to press hard after it, but it is, as we pursue some beasts, only for their skins: take off the covering, and though men obtain the truth, they would lament the loss of that: As *Jacob* wept and mourned over the torn Coat, when *Joseph* was alive. It is incredible to consider how interest outweighs truth. If a thing in it self be doubtfull, let it make for an interest and it shall be raised into a Probable; and if a truth be certain, and thwart interest, it will quickly fetch it down to but a Probability; nay, if it does not carry with it an impregnable Evidence, it will go near to debase it to a downright falsity. How much interest casts the Balance in cases dubious, I could give sundry instances: let one suffice.¹⁶³

South clearly perceives interest as a force which held much sway and influence over people's lives, but he does not seem to leave much room for any positive effects this influence might have when it comes to persuading people to be religious.

Citing Paul's letter to the Corinthians, South points out that one of the principles upon which the 'Wisdom of the World does proceed; is, *That Conscience and Religion ought to lay no Restraint upon Men at all, when it lies opposite to the Prosecution of their Interest*', and he is quick to associate this claim with Machiavelli, who, according to South 'laid down this for a Master-rule in his political Scheme, *That the Shew of Religion was helpfull to the Politician, but the Reality of it hurtfull, and pernicious*'.¹⁶⁴ In this sermon from April 1676, South makes

¹⁶¹ South 1692, pp. 101-2.

¹⁶² Smith 1660, p. 389. Smith, admired by Simon Patrick (among others) has been associated with the school of Cambridge Platonists.

¹⁶³ South 1692, pp. 125-6.

¹⁶⁴ South 1692, p. 434. Cf. Cor. 3.19: 'For the Wisdom of this World, is Foolishness with God.'

many references to the figure of the politician who will always prefer his own interest to the common good, and who will use the pretence of religion to his own advantage.

There was much uneasiness in this period of the power that worldly interests would have in instances of political ambition. As we have seen, one of the chief criticisms of the moderate Anglicans was their willingness to accept political rule over the church despite this apparently harming their chances of eternal salvation. Furthermore, it is likely that the notions of civil religion advocated by Harrington and other republicans, which survived the Restoration, were also very worrying in this respect.

The latitudinarian clergyman Edward Stillingfleet expresses a number of concerns about the prospect that religion becomes ‘subservient’ to people’s ‘civil interests’ and cites this in a sermon of 1666 as one of the causes of God’s wrath towards Sodom and Gomorrah (a clear allusion to the Fire of London of that year).¹⁶⁵ In another sermon, he complains that there are those who will accept natural religion, but believe they need only follow Christianity to the extent that it is upheld by the particular state in which they live. One of the arguments he attributes to them is that Christian doctrine has the potential to come into conflict with ‘the Civil Interests of men’.¹⁶⁶ Stillingfleet provides two counterarguments. Firstly, he shows that Christianity actually *is* consonant with ‘the Civil Interests of the World’ and that it ‘tends highly to the preservation of them’.¹⁶⁷ Secondly, the obedience compelled by the threat of the world to come – i.e. *duty* – renders the danger of the ‘interest’ of the individual entirely mute.¹⁶⁸ These two considerations might appear contradictory, but the addition of the word ‘Civil’ in the first instance implies that they are considered (by Stillingfleet at least) to be of a higher order than in the latter case; ‘Civil Interests’ have a value in themselves, separate from, and higher than, the particular interests of individuals.

¹⁶⁵ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 12.

¹⁶⁶ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 36.

¹⁶⁷ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 36.

¹⁶⁸ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, pp. 40-1.

It remains imperative that religion is not held ransom to secular interests, something that will only be prevented by a strong national church lead by the clergy, and not by politicians.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, there remains in Stillingfleet's writings an emphasis on the potential that our particular interests will lead us into immoral actions.¹⁷⁰ But it is important here that interests are not condemned entirely. Rather, it appears to be stressed that the *real* and *correct* interests have to be identified. It might be argued that it is a small step to the idea that, once the right interests have been identified, these interests can identified with what it is our duty to perform.

VIII

Finally, we come to the published sermons of John Tillotson, whose promotion to Archbishop of Canterbury in 1690 in the wake of the Glorious Revolution has been seen as symbolising the victory of the moderate Anglican outlook.¹⁷¹ Having been raised in a puritan family, Tillotson was educated in Cambridge in the 1640s, and consequently became enamoured of the latitudinarian theology he encountered in authors such as William Chillingworth. This led him to resolve in 1660 to conform to the re-established Anglican Church, though he maintained some lukewarm relations with dissenters. Along with Stillingfleet, Patrick, and others, he attempted, in January 1689, to introduce a Bill for the comprehension of dissenters into the Church of England. However, by this point few non-conformists were interested in Anglican comprehension, and more interested in

¹⁶⁹ One historian emphasises that his 'insistence on the need to profess Christianity in the face of sovereign opposition separated Stillingfleet from the Nicodemism of Hobbes and ... Tillotson' (Rose 2011, p. 144).

¹⁷⁰ Stillingfleet 1710, vol. 1, p. 137.

¹⁷¹ Tillotson's sermons were published in number of small collections across his seventeenth-century, but were not all numbered and collected together until after his death. I refer here only to the 1752 collection. For a bibliography with details of all printed editions of Tillotson's sermons in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Dixon 2009, pp. 256-9.

toleration.¹⁷² Despite having made it plain that he did not wish a bishopric, Tillotson was informed of the new king's desire to make him archbishop in 1689.

As we have already seen, Tillotson was one of the rationalist writers who stressed that a degree of temporal happiness was not necessarily inconsistent with a state of salvation. He does not always treat interests in this way when he uses the vocabulary in his sermons. This is very well illustrated in his earliest published sermon, which was originally issued in 1660 in the cross-denominational collection of sermons delivered at Cripplegate, collated by Samuel Annesley. The sermon is entitled with the question "Wherein lies that exact Righteousnesse, which is required between man and man?" and therefore clearly addresses itself to temporal issues of some political import.¹⁷³ But in the course of the text, 'self-interest' is associated with that 'which makes a man covetous' and causes us 'to lessen the circumstances of another man's condition, and to over-value our own'.¹⁷⁴ Interests make us 'obnoxious to one another' since 'we all love ourselves, and study the advancement of our interest and happiness'.¹⁷⁵

This is true also of later sermons, where we read:

I think it not unreasonable to entreat and urge men diligently to consider these matters; and if there be weight in these considerations to sway reasonable men, that they would not suffer themselves to be biassed [sic] by prejudice, or passion, or interest, to a contrary persuasion. Thus much I may with reason desire of men: for though men cannot believe what they will, yet men may, if they will, consider things seriously and impartially, and yield or withhold their assent, as they shall see cause, after a thorough search and examination.¹⁷⁶

Thus, it is clear throughout Tillotson's work, that those interests we have that distinguish us from other men and women are to be discouraged. Of course, this does open up the

¹⁷² For Tillotson's proposals for comprehension, see Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1743, 51-3. Cf. Spurr 1989, pp. 927-8.

¹⁷³ Tillotson 1661, sig. Ll, 4^v. This title does not appear at the head of the sermon as it is reprinted in Tillotson 1752, vol. 1, pp. cxxix-cxxxix.

¹⁷⁴ Tillotson 1752, vol. 1, pp. cxxix-cxxx.

¹⁷⁵ Tillotson 1752, vol. 1, p. cxxxi.

¹⁷⁶ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 445.

notion that those interests which unite us with our fellow men are to be praised. So, in a sermon of 1678 on the importance of charity, Tillotson claims that ‘Love unites the Interests of Men so much as to make them affected with what happens to another, as if it were in some sort their own Case’.¹⁷⁷ He goes on to suggest that the power of this love is applicable also to the commonwealth, as it causes us to put aside domestic quarrels in order to further the ‘publick Good, and the safety of the Commonwealth’.¹⁷⁸

The themes of love, charity, and service to our fellow men seem never to have been far from Tillotson’s mind in writing his sermons. Sermon 72 emphasises the obligation of the rich to help the poor by referencing the story of the rich man and Lazarus.¹⁷⁹ In Sermon 89, ‘Of doing good’, delivered in April 1691, he again emphasises the need to serve our fellow human beings. Tillotson argues that this ‘is an argument of a great, and noble and generous mind, to extend our thoughts and cares to the concernments of others, and to employ our interest, and power, and endeavours for their benefit and advantage’.¹⁸⁰ Tillotson practically embraces legalism in his claim that: ‘Obedience to the laws of God is the condition of our happiness, *both temporal and eternal*, both in this world, and the other.’¹⁸¹ We have already encountered this claim, and it points to the conclusion that being religious has the capacity to serve us in both this world and the next. Making this argument was considered of crucial importance in attracting people to true religion and away from the impostures of enthusiasm and atheism.

Tillotson makes the radical claim that what is in our interests is identical with what it is our duty to perform: ‘Surely nothing is more likely to prevail with wise and considerate Men to become Religious than to be thoroughly convinced, that *Religion* and *Happiness*, our *Duty* and our *Interest*, are really but one and the same thing considered under several

¹⁷⁷ Tillotson 1752, vol. 1, p. 170.

¹⁷⁸ Tillotson 1752, vol. 1, p. 175.

¹⁷⁹ Tillotson 1752, vol. 2, pp. 468-77.

¹⁸⁰ Tillotson 1752, vol. 2, p. 594.

¹⁸¹ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, pp. 334-5. Italics my own.

notions.¹⁸² This statement comes in the preface Tillotson composed for his edition of John Wilkins's much-reprinted work, *Of Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, in which Wilkins argues that (although revelation remains crucial to salvation), natural philosophy is sufficient to convince men to lead lives of religious piety.¹⁸³ 'The *nature* of *Man*' he states, consists 'in that faculty of Reason, whereby he is made capable of Religion, of apprehending a Deity, and of expecting a future state of rewards and punishments'.¹⁸⁴ Wilkins admits that natural good is inferior to moral good, but also points out that when we lack moral certainty it is necessary to rely on the natural evidence of rewards and punishment in order to direct our actions and belief. As he points out, 'there would be little reason for the Scripture so much to magnify the Grace of *Faith*, as being so great a vertue and so acceptable to God, if every one were necessitated to do it, whether he would or no'.¹⁸⁵ Hence the conclusion that, once man has naturally established the existence of a divine being, 'it is most suitable both to the Reason and Interest of mankind, that every one should submit themselves to him, upon whom they depend for their Well-being, by doing such things as may render them Acceptable to him'.¹⁸⁶ The result of all this goes some way to justifying Tillotson's claim that it is in our interest as well as our duty to live a life of Christian piety.¹⁸⁷

Tillotson makes the same point in his sermon (undated) on "The present and future Advantage of an Holy and Virtuous Life", where he argues:

there is no real Interest of this World but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and pursued to as great Advantage by a Man that exercises himself in the Practice of all Virtue and Goodness, and usually to far greater Advantage, than by one that

¹⁸² Tillotson 1675, sig. A, 5^v.

¹⁸³ Tillotson's successor as archbishop, Gilbert Burnet argues that (along with a reading of Chillingworth), Tillotson's conversion to Anglicanism, and his rebellion against the Calvinism of his youth, was his relationship with Wilkins. See Rivers 1991, p. 30.

¹⁸⁴ Wilkins 1675, p. 18.

¹⁸⁵ Wilkins 1675, pp. 31-2.

¹⁸⁶ Wilkins 1675, p. 20.

¹⁸⁷ Tillotson was not the first to use this formulation. At least one earlier precedent can be found in Allestree 1667 (p. 438). However, Tillotson's theology as a whole is the most comprehensive support for the claim that interest and duty are identical.

is Intemperate and Debauched, Deceitful and Dishonest, apt to disoblige and provoke, sour and ill-natured to Mankind.¹⁸⁸

His claim here is primarily focused on the advantages that accrue to us from being religious. This is partly achieved by convincing his audience that the opposite is false: that ‘there is no Advantage come to any Man by a wicked and vicious course of Life’. It is thus a small step to the conclusion that, ‘on the contrary, the Advantages of am holy and good Life are many and great even in this World, and upon temporal accounts’.¹⁸⁹

In sermon 108, on ‘The Unprofitableness of Sin in this Life’, Tillotson argues that it is natural for man to follow his ‘interests’, and this appears to be the wisest path for man to take:

[man] can hardly be imposed upon by any Art, or persuaded by any Solicitation, to act plainly contrary to it yet in matter of their Sin and Duty, that is, in that which of all other is of greatest concernment to them, they have little or no regard to it; but are so blinded and bewitched with *the deceitfulness of Sin*, as not to consider the infinite Danger and Disadvantage of it; and at the same time to cast the commandments of God, and the Consideration of their own Happiness behind their backs.¹⁹⁰

Tillotson’s point is that it is good to turn back to what might be described as our ‘true’ interest, and thereby away from sin. However, it is also clear that those advantages that are indicated by this ‘true interest’ are not merely of earthly concern, and that they may include the advantages we earn in the future life through our actions here in the world.

This is not to say that Tillotson advocated preferring our worldly concerns above heavenly ones. Having established that our temporal advantage lies in being religious, Tillotson seeks to show us the same in terms of *utility*. In Sermon 134, entitled ‘The Usefulness of considering our latter End’, he begins with a quotation from the Psalmist: ‘teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom’.¹⁹¹ The

¹⁸⁸ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 53.

¹⁸⁹ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 52.

¹⁹⁰ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 23.

¹⁹¹ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 205. Cf. Psalm 90.12.

‘usefulness’ that comes with this numbering of our days is, for Tillotson, that it ‘should teach us the true price and value of all temporal enjoyments, and make us duly affected towards them’. But crucially, this due affection ‘towards the enjoyments of this world’ is in fact ‘a coldness and indifferency’, especially when we contemplate their uncertainty in contrast to the absolute certainty that is to come after death.¹⁹² However, this involves the requirement that we improve our holiness, and this in turn has already been shown to be for our worldly advantage. Similarly, Tillotson is still very keen to stress the importance of revelation, and the particular attributes of Christianity, which were not only the best, but indeed the *only* route to salvation.¹⁹³

Sermon 170 draws a number of these strands together, and is entitled “The Efficacy, Usefulness, and Reasonableness of Divine Faith”. Here, Tillotson claims that it is not only to our advantage, but downright ‘necessary to every man’s interest to be religious’.¹⁹⁴ In this sermon, it is not entirely clear that ‘interest’ refers only to material concerns, since Tillotson seems to be drawing our attention to man’s *eternal* rewards and punishments as well: ‘Every man which believes the revelations which God hath made, cannot but be satisfied, how much religion is his interest from the promises and threatenings of God’s word.’¹⁹⁵ What *is* clear, is that the consequences of our actions, as they relate to a particular interest either in this world or the next, are important, and not simply reliant on the imputed grace of God.

Tillotson does not seem concerned that the protestant clergy can be charged with being concerned with only suspicious and corrupt interests. We see this if we consider Sermon 179, on ‘The Advantages of Truth, in Opposition to Error’, in which he turns this very attack upon Catholics:

¹⁹² Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 210.

¹⁹³ See Rivers 1991, pp. 69-70.

¹⁹⁴ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, pp. 439-40.

¹⁹⁵ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 440. See also Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 498.

The doctrines of our religion are free from the suspicions of a worldly interest and design. But if we consider the doctrines and innovations of that church which pretends to be the only Christian catholick society in the world, we shall find that they are of another stamp, and of quite contrary tendency, that they favour so rankly of a worldly interest, that any impartial man would at first sight judge them to be the contrivances of worldly, covetous, and ambitious men, and that they do not look like divine truths, and doctrines that are *of God*, but that they are *of the world*, and therefore they that propagate them, and would seduce men to them, *speak from the world, and the world heareth them*.¹⁹⁶

This argument came to be increasingly important in the light of the litany of charges that were to be brought against *all* clergy in early Enlightenment. Tillotson's comments in this respect, and with regard to the continuing importance of divine revelation, might be seen as furnishing later Anglicans such as Joseph Butler with a retort to these accusations.

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Tillotson's conclusion that interest and duty are identical does not close the story. It can explain why, in 1726, Joseph Butler (another rational dissenter turned moderate Anglican, and very much influenced by latitudinarian theology) argues that what is in our interest is also in our duty.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, we can see that Butler is simply following the lead of Tillotson in this respect. But Tillotson does not seem to be concerned to show how the private interests of individuals might naturally serve the common good. The next two chapters are concerned with various attempts to show how interests might come into alignment with the common good. However, neither provide the natural harmony of private interests and common good that we find in Butler's sermons, with which my argument comes to a close.

¹⁹⁶ Tillotson 1752, vol. 3, p. 503.

¹⁹⁷ Butler 1726, p. 54.

Commonwealth thought, opposition, and interests in the Restoration and beyond

I

I have already established that, in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), James Harrington showed how private and particular interests might be brought into conformity with the common good by an institutional and constitutional process. In this chapter, I intend to pursue this conception of interests as it develops in the writings of theorists of the commonwealth and England's mixed constitution following the Restoration, and describe how the nature of this manipulation of interests developed in writers of the commonwealth tradition from 1673 to 1733.¹ We begin with Shaftesbury's accusatory *Letter from a Person of Quality, to his Friend in the Country*, in which is laid out the fear that the court is forming a 'party' separate from the good of the people. This then becomes the signal approach to the question of interests and the common good in the next sixty years. The commonwealth men writing during the Exclusion Crisis (1679-81), during the formation of the Whig's theoretical canon in the 1690s, and the growing concern over court corruption present in *Cato's Letters* (1720-3) and Bolingbroke's *Dissertation on Parties* (1733-4), all make reference to the fear that the English monarchy and its court are coming to represent an interest contrary to the interest of the people. Since they all conceive of government as instituted in order to guarantee the security and interest of the people (importantly, conceived as a body, and not merely as a collection of individuals), they want to show that this separation of interests renders such monarchs and courts ineligible as good forms of government.

¹ A number of the theorists who talk about interests in this way in this period cannot readily be described as 'republicans', since they were prepared to accept a limited form of monarchy and arbitrary power. I therefore prefer to follow Caroline Robbins in describing the whole group as 'commonwealth men' or writers on the commonwealth (Robbins 1959). I describe truly anti-monarchist figures as republicans, and I also retain the adjective 'republican' to describe a conception of interest that I see as having origins in the republican thought of the 1650s.

An understanding of the heritage of republicans such as Machiavelli and Harrington is, of course, very important and I shall draw attention to parallels with their thought when appropriate. Indeed, we need to consider the impact of Henry Neville's new translation of Machiavelli's political works in 1675, and John Toland's published collection of Harrington's works, both very significant in the formation of whig canons of the eighteenth century. As Blair Worden points out, 'the Restoration monarchy failed to disprove Harrington's assertion that stability was incompatible with the subordination of the commons to the royal prerogative'.² But, I primarily want to show that this post-Restoration commonwealth tradition offers a view of interests that deserves study in its own right, and has too long been dwarfed by Harrington's eminent discussions of interests in *Oceana*.

Very little historical attention has been focussed on this clear continuity of a republican conception of interests between the 1670s and the 1730s. Gunn's history barely mentions any of the figures or texts that I survey. Other histories of interest or interests are almost entirely silent when it comes to English commonwealth men other than Harrington and Nedham in the 1650s. Historians of republicanism only mention interests in passing, except (again) in the context of the Interregnum. Gunn's classic contribution to the discussion of the public interest in the 1960s consisted in the assertion that 'controversy in the seventeenth century gave at least two coherent meanings to the concept, one of them accommodating particular interests, the other paying them little regard'.³ Gunn is concerned principally with the first of these meanings, and seeks to track its rise over the course of the century. It is a conception of the public interest that is supposedly 'liberal', since by making individual particular interests the basis of government, it was forced to guarantee 'the protection of private

² Worden 1994b, p. 139.

³ Gunn 1969, pp. 329-30.

rights'. 'The virtue of a public interest conceived in terms of maintaining private rights', Gunn argues, 'was that it reduced the lustrous and distant goal of a public good to proportions that were comprehensible to private persons.'⁴

That such a notion of the public interest existed at all is questionable, but what is certain is that this 'liberal' conception of the relationship between private interests and the public interest was by no means the only alternative to the traditional position 'that the unquestioned common interest was that the state remain secure from all disorder'.⁵ I propose that these were not the only options available to the seventeenth-century English consciousness. It was not merely a choice between blindly following the dictates of a court enthralled to reason of state, or a liberal understanding of the public interest which concluded that it was best simply to leave each individual to determine his or her own good. There was a third way, in which individuals sincerely desired to live in a state in which the people as a whole were free and virtuous.

The most important theme addressed in this chapter is the concern that the monarchy might come to represent an interest that is 'separate' from the interest of the people. Another characteristic of the thought of commonwealth men in this period is the emphasis placed on the virtue inherent in the interest of the nobility, as opposed to that of the monarchy. As early as 1675, the earl of Shaftesbury comments that it is 'the interest of the nation', and not simply the private interest of the Lords, that there is an aristocracy to protect England's ancient constitution.⁶ This may be considered a reference to Harrington's talk of 'the public interest of liberty', which is everyone's interest, but which the people rely on the aristocracy to be a constant reminder of.⁷

We shall see that the royal prerogative is, by some of these thinkers, accepted as a part of the mixed constitution, but the measure used to circumscribe it is now limited to the

⁴ Gunn 1969, pp. 323-6.

⁵ Gunn 1969, pp. 322-3.

⁶ *State Tracts ... in the Reign of Charles II ...* 1693, p. 59.

⁷ Harrington 1977, p. 183. See also chapter 3 above.

extent to which it serves the common good. This involved a new emphasis being laid on the idea of government being instituted solely for the interest of the governed. This is lent greater credence after the events of 1688-9, since England is now seen as a country that is a commonwealth in all but name. However, it also soon becomes clear that without sound mechanisms or principles by which to regulate such powers, the republican ideal of a government that serves the interest of the corporate body of the people soon begins to look more and more fragile.

II

We begin with the political crisis that surrounded the publication of Shaftesbury's *A Letter from a Person of Quality, to His Friend in the Country* in 1675. Shaftesbury opens his missive with the accusation that a certain group in parliament are attempting to '*make a distinct Party* from the rest of the Nation', which will consist of 'the High Episcopal Man, and the Old Cavalier, who are to swallow up the hopes of enjoying all the Power and Office of the Kingdom'.⁸ The attempt he refers to is the proposed Test Bill, which ministers, led by Thomas Osborne, earl of Danby, were trying to get through parliament, which would have required the population to take an oath of non-resistance to the crown.

Shaftesbury had begun his political career as a royalist, and missed out on election to the Long Parliament in 1640. In 1643 he gave up all his royal commissions when he came to the conclusion that Charles was attempting to arrogate absolute power to himself. Having served in the Cromwell's Council of State during the Interregnum, at the same time opposing Cromwell's direct rule and opposing the succession of Richard Cromwell in 1659-60, under Charles II Shaftesbury served first as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1661-72) and then as Lord Chancellor (1672-3). During Clarendon's ministry, he had

⁸ [Shaftesbury] 1675, p. 1.

opposed the so-called Clarendon Code, and supported the King's attempted indulgences of nonconformity. From November 1673 Shaftesbury was the figurehead for the opposition in parliament.

Shaftesbury's opposition was motivated by a desire to prevent England from falling under 'arbitrary and absolute' government, and to protect it from those who would 'allow Monarchy as well as Episcopacy to be *Jure Divino*, and not to be bounded, or limited by humane Laws'.⁹ He insists that it is only when a monarch is no longer subject to human law that he or she begins to constitute an interest separate from the people. 'In our *English* Government, and all bounded Monarchys, where the Prince is not absolute', he argues, 'there every individual Subject is under the fear of the King ... either for breaking the Peace, is disturbing the common Interest that every Man hath in it'.¹⁰ The only way in which a monarch can be 'under the fear of breaking that Golden Chain and Connexure between Him and his People' is 'by making his interest contrary to that they justly and rightly claim'.¹¹ Here we find epitomized the dominant conception of interests and the common good as it would be expressed by supporters of the commonwealth for the next sixty years: when rulers are subject to the scrutiny of the people, the interests of the two is the same, but when the rulers try to rule without such bounds, they begin to constitute a 'separate' and often 'corrupt' interest. In the remainder of this section we shall see how two royalist pamphleteers responded to Shaftesbury's accusations, and we shall encounter their denial that the oversight of the people is required to maintain the identity of interests between the monarch and the people.

This is the last point in which we shall encounter the figure of Marchamont Nedham. In the wake of the publication of Shaftesbury's *Letter*, Nedham anonymously published two *Pacquets of Advices and Animadversions* in 1676 and 1677. What is perhaps most striking

⁹ [Shaftesbury] 1675, p. 1.

¹⁰ [Shaftesbury] 1675, p. 16.

¹¹ [Shaftesbury] 1675, pp. 16-17.

about Nedham's pamphlets is that he accepts a number of points that are not consistent with the divine right claims of royalists such as Robert Filmer. For example, he admits that 'by the Constitution of this *Kingdom*, the Commons House of *Parliament* have an Interest in the *Power of Legislation*, that no Law can be made, or repealed without them'.¹² As we are about to see, the privileging of the House of Commons is a crucial aspect of Nedham's attack on the aristocratic nature of Shaftesbury's opposition.

Nedham may be engaging in a work of royalist propaganda on behalf of Charles II, but he nevertheless draws explicit attention to the Leveller sympathies he had developed in the 1640s. In the sarcastic manner we have come to expect from him, Nedham reminds his audience that the Levellers – and he singles out Lilburne – had argued 'that it suited not with the freedom and Interest of the people of England, That some men should continue long in Publick Trust and Power as the Peoples Representatives, seeing the rest of the people had as much right to govern as they, and therefore ought to have a turn as well in the Government'.¹³ Hereby, Nedham associates the claims of Shaftesbury's party with the dangerous radicalism of the Levellers.

But it is also possible to scare the Peers with the threat which these radical doctrines posed to the House of Lords itself. Nedham claims: 'I could here inject Quotations too many out of their Published Papers, to shew their Lordships, how smartly they argued also with the same kind of Sophistry for the utter subversion of the House of Peers', who are 'subject to the same frailties' as others.¹⁴ The aristocracy are just as likely – 'being continually in power' – 'to produce Factions, and drive particular Interests and Ends to the prejudice of the Publick'.¹⁵ In this sense, it could be argued that we return to the kind of reasoning Nedham displays in his discussion of perennial office-holders in *The Excellencie of the Free State*, written in the 1650s.

¹² [Nedham] 1676, p. 18.

¹³ [Nedham] 1676, p. 33.

¹⁴ [Nedham] 1676, p. 34.

¹⁵ [Nedham] 1676, p. 34.

By the time we reach the end of Nedham's *Pacquet*, his tactics become very clear: he seeks to isolate Shaftesbury's country party by appealing to the wisdom and understanding of the Commons:

The Generality of this House of Commons are known to be men of the best Quality, and of Estates, and of the best understandings. All their Fault is, in the Opinion of the *Conspiring Party*, that they too well understand them and their Design; and what the true interest of the Crown is, and that as they ever have been, so they still are tight and firm to it, and the Government; and that the great interest of the Nobles, Gentry and Commons of the Land lies in being so. This they understand: Besides, they are men best acquainted and expert in the management of Parliamentary Affairs, and therefore more likely than men newly elected, to make dispatch of them, if the *Projectors* did not study all ways to impede them, for other ends than the ease and supply of the Crown.¹⁶

It is of great significance that Nedham writes about the 'Generality' and thereby seeks to ally the people with the monarchy, to the exclusion of the ambitious and troublesome nobility.

A position that never appears to change in Nedham's thought is his scorn for the Presbyterians. One reason he cites against the Lords' clamour for the dissolution of Parliament is the risk of opening it up to Presbyterians.¹⁷ In general, his concern is very much with the potential of such groups to form a 'separate Interest' and a 'Many Headed Papacy'.¹⁸ In this way, Nedham provides another precursor to the notion of 'separate interests' that is to be so important in the rest of this chapter.

Similarly, the royalism of figures such as the historian and pamphleteer, John Nalson came to stress the alleged identity between the king's interest and the interest of the people. Like Nedham, Nalson does not follow Filmer in tracing the authority of kings from the original patriarchal power of Adam. However, he does insist, against the claims of commonwealth men, that no law can exist 'till there be some frame of Government,

¹⁶ [Nedham] 1676, p. 37.

¹⁷ [Nedham] 1676, pp. 41-2.

¹⁸ [Nedham] 1676, p. 19.

to establish and enact such Laws'.¹⁹ He recognises that government arises out of a God-given desire for self-preservation and the 'Tumults, Wars, hostile Invasions, and Depredations' that came as a result of God's division of mankind into different nations.²⁰

Nelson's criticism of democracy and popular rule is based on the claim that only in a monarchy are the public interest and common good truly served. He argues that in a democracy, the individual subject's judgment comes to prejudice the common good, since 'every one of these Parliament *Demarchs* was as absolute by himself as the Law of his own Will could make him'.²¹ Nelson bids his readers 'examine the Constitution of a Republick way of Government in it self, in light of 'the end of Government', which he says 'is the Well-being and Happiness of the Society'.²² When we undertake such an evaluation, he argues, we come to see that whoever comes to rule in a republic 'must at the same time maintain a separate Interest of his own private affairs, distinct from those of the publick'.²³

The magistrate in a republic will not ensure protection against foreign enemies: 'it is possible, that by selling the present Power he does possess, and bartering away the publick Interest, he may arrive at a higher pitch of greatness, and a more durable command, than otherways he could ever have hoped for'.²⁴ Nor will he ensure domestic bliss.²⁵ Finally, the presence of 'many Governours, who ... have a separate Interest, distinct from that of the Publick' leads to an unequal administration of justice, since government is constituted by a 'separate Faction and Interest'.²⁶ In contrast, Nelson claims:

¹⁹ Nelson 1677, pp. 14-15.

²⁰ Nelson 1677, pp. 10-12.

²¹ Nelson 1677, p. 40.

²² Nelson 1677, pp. 47-8.

²³ Nelson 1677, pp. 50-1.

²⁴ Nelson 1677, pp. 54-5.

²⁵ Nelson 1677, pp. 61-2.

²⁶ Nelson 1677, pp. 65-8.

Hereditary *Monarchy* (not Elective, which for that reason is the worst kind of it) has no separate Interest or distinct design from the good of the Publick; for whether it be Peace; Plenty, Glory, Riches, Trade, War, Happiness or Misfortune, the People can have none of these in general, but the Prince must have his share of them too, so that the Prince cannot be miserable and his People truly happy, nor the Prince happy whilst his People are really miserable. And therefore a *Monarch* in consulting the safety, honour, welfare, peace, and prosperity of his People, does at the same time consult his own Interest in every one of them: And this must of necessity oblige him look to the equal distribution of Justice in Rewards and Punishments, to encourage the Good, and discourage of the Ill, to remove the Turbulent and dangerous, who oppose the happiness of the Community, and by consequence his own.²⁷

Nelson perceives there to be as much danger posed by an elected monarch as by an elected assembly, since the motive to become elected will introduce an interest unrelated to the ends of government. Neither does the process of election guarantee that those who end up in power will have the appropriate education, whereas this is something that is assured in an individual who has been bred specifically to take the throne.²⁸

It could be argued that this defence of monarchy became even more difficult after 1679, when the whig opposition set its efforts to the exclusion of James based on his apparent intention of forming an interest separate from the public. In other words, it became harder to claim that the king's interest was entirely identical with that of the people, and this could be seen as a reason for the re-assertion of patriarchal divine right arguments such as those of Robert Filmer, whose *Patriarcha* was pushed to the forefront of debate with its publication in 1680.

On the front page of *Patriarcha*, Filmer provides an explanation of the title itself. 'Patriarcha' means 'that the first kings were fathers of families'.²⁹ For Filmer, the very nature of power is patriarchal: he points his readers towards the biblical commandment 'to honour thy father', and argues that 'if we compare the natural duties of a father with those of a king, we find them to be all one, without any difference at all but only in the

²⁷ Nelson 1677, pp. 108-9.

²⁸ Nelson 1677, p. 113.

²⁹ Filmer 1991, p. 1.

latitude or extent of them'.³⁰ Filmer goes on to argue that, since all power is patriarchal, and since it is absurd for children to select their parents, so it is absurd for subjects to choose their governors.³¹

Filmer does not employ the vocabulary of interests in his treatise. Indeed, Filmer had died in 1653 at the age of sixty-five. In 1648 he published a reply to Philip Hunton's *Treatise of Monarchy*, entitled *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy*, in which he argues that 'we do but flatter ourselves, if we hope ever to be governed without an arbitrary power'.³² Filmer also claims to be responding to the debate between Fern and Herle, both of whom accept (in different ways) that England is a mixed constitution.³³ He claims they are wrong to accept not only that obedience is owed to a mixture made up of monarch, aristocracy and democracy, but also that parliament is representative of anything but 'only ... a part of the lower or inferior part of the body of the people'.³⁴ Filmer was thus one of the most reactionary royalists writing in the 1640s, and in May 1652 he published *Observations upon Aristotles Politiques*, in which he criticised both Hobbes and Milton, though he ultimately advocated allegiance to the new regime on the basis that 'all power on earth is either derived or usurped from the fatherly power', and therefore the power of the usurper 'is before and better than the title of any other than of him that had a former right'.³⁵

It is unclear when exactly *Patriarcha* was originally written, so we cannot be certain of its precise political context. What *is* clear is that, when it was finally published in 1680, it was being used as a form of propaganda for the tories in parliament in their battle to defend the right of succession of Jame, Duke of York, the king's brother. Charles II had no legitimate children on whom to confer the succession, so his brother was the obvious

³⁰ Filmer 1991, pp. 11-12.

³¹ Filmer 1991, pp. 12-34.

³² Filmer 1991, p. 132.

³³ Filmer 1991, p. 134.

³⁴ Filmer 1991, p. 146.

³⁵ Filmer 1991, pp. 282-4.

choice (though there were opportunities to legitimate his bastard son, James Duke of Monmouth throughout the 1670s). However, whigs within parliament were opposed to the succession of James, since they suspected that he was secretly a papist, and, if crowned, would seek to impose Catholicism on the nation. In the wake of the uncovering of the so-called Popish Plot in 1678 and the anti-Catholic hysteria that followed, the opposition brought a bill to parliament for the exclusion of James from the line of succession. Crucial to their arguments was the fact that the claim of Filmer (among others) – that James had a right to succeed simply through hereditary right – were a form of arbitrary government anathema to the liberty of the people. In turn, it is asserted that, by opposing the exclusion bill, both Charles and James were constituting for themselves a separate interest from that of the nation.

III

The Exclusion Crisis was a situation in which the opposition perceived Charles II's regime to be threatening arbitrary government.³⁶ The first writer I shall discuss, although not a republican (or even a commonwealth man) in the classical sense, and being much more concerned with issues of natural law, does introduce a conception of interests and the common good which fits into the opposition between government for the sake of the governed, and government for the sake of the governor. Indeed, we have long known John Locke's *Two Treatises* to have been composed not in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1688-9, but during the Exclusion Crisis itself, and it is here that I shall begin.³⁷

In chapters 8 and 9, 'Of the Beginning of Political Societies' and 'Of the Ends of Political Society and Government', we are given a Hobbesian account of why some form

³⁶ Scott 1991, p. 62.

³⁷ See Laslett 1988, pp. 3-126.

of overall power to preserve ourselves and our property is necessary. Locke has just argued that men in the state of nature are all free and have equal right to all that is available to them, and therefore begins chapter 8 with the assertion that ‘no one can be put out of this Estate, and subjected to the Political Power of another, without his own *Consent*’ and that ‘the only way whereby any one devests himself of his Natural Liberty, and *puts on the bonds of Civil Society* is by agreeing with other Men to joyn and unite into a Community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another’.³⁸

Hobbes had made a strong distinction between ‘concord’ and ‘union’, arguing that the latter was infinitely to be preferred over the former. Men who are merely in concord with one another are likely to fall back into a state of natural hostility as soon as their momentary interests are no longer the same.³⁹ Similarly, Locke argues that every member of a community has to conceive of themselves as being obliged to the authority of the majority of that community. In other words, once political authority has been established, the community cannot continue to rely on every single individual member consenting to every community decision. ‘Such a consent is next [to] impossible ever to be had’, Locke claims, ‘if we consider the Infirmities of Health, and Avocations of Business, which in a number, though much less than that of a Common-wealth, will necessarily keep many away from the publick Assembly’.⁴⁰ He goes on to point to ‘the variety of Opinions, and contrariety of Interests, which unavoidably happen in all Collections of Men’.⁴¹ Thus, in a manner very close to Hobbes, Locke wants to stress that, at bottom, constitutional arrangements cannot be determined by interests.

Locke does not reject the possibility that some nations will decide that monarchy (and in some cases, absolute monarchy) is the most appropriate form for them. Indeed, he argues that ‘if we look back as far as History will direct us ... we generally see them

³⁸ Locke 1988, pp. 330-1.

³⁹ See chapter 2 above.

⁴⁰ Locke 1988, p. 332.

⁴¹ Locke 1988, pp. 332-3.

under the Government and Administration of one Man’.⁴² Locke’s suggestion is that in more primitive societies (he cites the first peoples of America, Peru and Mexico), ‘Paternal affection’ was considered the best means by which people ‘secured their Property, and Interest’.⁴³ But this has falsely led many to think that monarchy is the naturally eminent form of government. Kings may have been the first rulers, but ‘it is plain Mankind never owned nor considered any such natural *subjection, that they were born in*, to one or to the other, that tied them, without their own Consents, to a Subjection to them and their Heirs’.⁴⁴

So, Locke has established that government in general will ensure ‘a common measure to decide all Controversies between’ individual human beings. He argues that the law of nature is plain, rational, and ‘intelligible to all creatures’, but that individuals are ‘biased by their Interests’ into perverting those natural laws that would otherwise be self-evident.⁴⁵ Thus, men incorporate themselves into a ‘Commonwealth, separate from the rest of Mankind’ in order that they can protect themselves and their property from the subjective and ultimately arbitrary claims of others.⁴⁶

The same point is made in chapter 11, where Locke deals with the individual holders of legislative power. He argues that the role of the legislative is to promote justice, and that this requires written statutes, which are differentiated from the ‘unwritten’ laws of nature. The latter, it is argued, cannot lay claim to natural law, since it is ‘nowhere to be found but in the minds of Men, they who through Passion or Interest shall mis-cite, or misapply it [and] cannot so easily be convinced of their mistake where there is no established Judge’.⁴⁷ So, unlike Hobbes, Locke denies that authority can be set up to

⁴² Locke 1988, p. 336.

⁴³ Locke 1988, p. 337.

⁴⁴ Locke 1988, p. 345.

⁴⁵ Locke 1988, p. 351.

⁴⁶ Locke 1988, p. 352.

⁴⁷ Locke 1988, p. 358.

enforce natural laws, and he does this since his conception of what is constituted by natural law is much richer than the one we find in *Leviathan*.

Despite the existence of such ‘settled standing laws’, Locke still acknowledges that it is possible for governors to conceive of themselves as having ‘a distinct interest, to the rest of the community’, which will cause them to attempt to promote themselves over the members of the commonwealth. He indicates that this is far more likely in absolute monarchies, where legislative assemblies are permanent and not re-elected by the people.⁴⁸ In this respect Locke is very close to those republicans (such as Nedham in the 1650s) we have already encountered, in insisting that the continual returning of new parliaments is the best way to ensure liberty for subjects.

Here, Locke’s overriding concern with property is clear. He argues that absolute power (the kind that the executive has over officers in the army, for example) is nevertheless ‘not Arbitrary’, since it should still be ‘limited by that reason, and confined to those ends, which required it in some Cases to be absolute’.⁴⁹ Although officers owe their commander a ‘blind Obedience’ in all things related to the military, they still retain the full liberty to dispose of their property however they like.⁵⁰

Perhaps Locke’s most significant engagement with the vocabulary comes in chapter 14, where he deals with the prerogative powers of monarchs. He points out that ‘the good of Society requires, that several things should be left to the discretion of him, that has the Executive power’, and that ‘this power, whilst employed for the benefit of the Community, and suitably to the trust and ends of the Government, is *undoubted Prerogative*, and his never questioned’.⁵¹ The important variable here is the extent to which those powers categorised as prerogative are deployed for their proper purpose (the good of the people) rather than the particular interest of the executive power. Locke argues that the

⁴⁸ Locke 1988, pp. 360-1.

⁴⁹ Locke 1988, p. 361.

⁵⁰ Locke 1988, p. 362.

⁵¹ Locke 1988, pp. 374-5.

people can have no recourse against prerogatives that are ‘defined by positive laws’.⁵² They are very much entitled to protest at those ‘*incroachments* which prejudice or hinder the publick good’. This occurs, Locke claims, when ‘a weak and ill Prince’ seeks to ‘make or promote an Interest distinct from that of the publick’.⁵³

The conclusion we come to in the case of Locke, is that although he bears very little relation to the other commonwealth men with whom we are concerned for most of this chapter, he shared their worry, that the health of the polity is threatened when its rulers attempt to promote their own separate interests over the interests of the people.

IV

Another text that was designed to justify the exclusion of the Duke of York, but was not published until after the Revolution, was Algernon Sidney’s *Discourses Concerning Government*. This text was composed between the second half of 1681 and May 1683, when Sidney was arrested for his part in the Rye House Plot.⁵⁴ As with Locke’s *Treatises*, the main target is Robert Filmer and his patriarchal justification for monarchy.

Sidney objects to Filmer’s assertion that monarchy is the mode of government to which God has commanded us to be subject. He also objects to Filmer’s characterisation of Bellarmine as asserting that ‘democracy is an ordinance of God’; Sidney is adamant that Bellarmine makes no such claim.⁵⁵ Rather, the whole of the section is dedicated to denying that God has made any stipulation as to how men ought to govern themselves. It is instead within the original power of the whole body of the people to choose how they are to be governed, and this power may be given to as large or as small number as

⁵² Locke 1988, p. 376.

⁵³ Locke 1988, p. 377.

⁵⁴ Scott 1991, p. 201; Worden 1985, pp. 12-15.

⁵⁵ Sidney 1996b, p. 20. The *Discourses Concerning Government* is a long, repetitive, and unwieldy text. Sidney’s discussion is not structured in a way that is helpful to the modern reader, and much material is rehearsed and re-rehearsed using different vocabulary. I have attempted to show where points or arguments are repeated.

the people decides is fitting to them. As a consequence, it is also necessary that there remain the right of changing this form government if and when it becomes inappropriate, or those in power abuse their authority:

in plain English, the inconvenience with which such as he [Filmer] endeavour[s] to affright us, is no more than that he or they, to whom the power is given, may be restrained or chastised, if they betray their trust; which I presume will displease none, but such as would rather submit Rome, with the best part of the world depending upon it, to the Will of Caligula or Nero, than Caligula or Nero to the judgment of the senate and people; that is, rather to expose many great and brave nations to be destroyed by the rage of a savage beast, than subject that beast to the judgment of all, or the choicest men of them, who can have no interest to pervert them, or other reason to be severe to him, than to prevent the mischiefs he would commit, and to save the people from ruin.⁵⁶

Sidney wants to argue that those entrusted with political power should have no interest to subvert or oppose the reason for their appointment, which is always conceived as upholding the common good.

When governors stop being concerned with the laws of men – those from whom their authority is derived – and thereby ‘degenerate into a most unjust and detestable tyranny’, it is because ‘the supreme Lord begins to prefer his own interest or profit, before the good of his Subjects’.⁵⁷ Sidney explains that those societies that have retained their freedom and avoided slavery are those in which the people ‘have preferred their own Good before the personal Interests of him that expects the Crown’.⁵⁸ Similarly, in describing the ideal virtue of the monarch, Sidney states that ‘he must be content to submit his interest unto theirs, since he is no more than anyone of them, in any respect other than that he is by the consent of all, raised above any other’.⁵⁹ However, since men are by nature imperfect and unreliable, the people should be wary of putting power into the hands of individual wills.

⁵⁶ Sidney 1996b, pp. 21-2.

⁵⁷ Sidney 1996b, p. 52.

⁵⁸ Sidney 1996b, p. 90.

⁵⁹ Sidney 1996b, p. 313.

In a manner reminiscent of Harrington, Sidney denies that the government of ancient Israel was paternalistic, arguing that God raised Moses not by any hereditary right, but by ‘bestowing such gifts upon him as were required for the performance of his work’. It was not until the people threw off their divinely appointed leadership, that the arbitrary and paternal power of kings came into being and oppressed them.⁶⁰ Once the link between God and the divinely ordained government of Moses had been broken, it was imperative to see the origin of government as human, rather than divine. One nation’s right to appoint kings had also to be inherent in every other nation:

The *Israelites*, *Spartans*, *Romans* and others, who thus framed their governments according to their own Will, did it not by any particular Privilege, but by a universal Right conferred upon them by God and Nature: They were made of no better Clay than others: They had no Right, that does not as well belong to other Nations: that is to say, The Constitution of every Government is referred to those who are concerned in it, and no other has any thing to do with it.⁶¹

Thus, ‘Magistrates are distinguished from other men, by the Power with which the Law invests them for the publick Good’ and ‘he that cannot or will not, procure that Good, destroys his own being’.⁶²

Sidney wants to say not that monarchs are inherently evil, but that those monarchs who do not recognise the value to their own greatness of the liberty and overall good of their people are weak and unstable. Filmer had argued that the acquiescence and obedience of the people alone is virtuous, whereas Sidney is quick to claim that virtue is only ensured by *liberty*. Stability in turn relies upon liberty, without which the kingdom is weak; thus it is, in a very real sense, in the interest of the king to govern according to the common good of the people, rather than according to any separate interest he might have. Furthermore, absolute monarchy is susceptible to ‘perpetual Fluctuation’, since it

⁶⁰ Sidney 1996b, p. 29.

⁶¹ Sidney 1996b, p. 37.

⁶² Sidney 1996b, p. 51.

becomes subject to the whim of the 'Interest' and 'Interests' of its various counsellors and ministers.⁶³

The spectre of the corrupt courtier is a major theme of Sidney's earlier unpublished work of the 1660s: his *Court Maxims*. This was a manuscript comprising fifteen dialogues between two fictional characters: the virtuous Eunomius (clearly the voice of Sidney) and Philaethes, who is introduced in the first dialogue as returning home from a day at court.

One of his first comments is a self-deprecating homage to Eunomius's friendship:

I have found in you all the qualities of a perfect friend, and though I have been long enough at court to conform myself for the most part to the rules that govern there, I have yet I know not what obscure remembrance of virtue and piety that makes me esteem persons who are so eminent in both as you are. And though I ordinarily find more pleasure in the conversation of those who seek only to delight themselves and me, than in such scrupulous examiners of things as deny themselves all pleasures and advantages that are not lawful, yet when I have anything in my mind that is important and serious (leaving those lightheads, who, aiming only at vain pleasures or profits, never search into the truth of things, and, being accustomed to make their fortunes by betraying friends, are of very uncertain faith) I seek such as are of a more sober temper, and who, by despising the interests we seek after, cannot be suspected of the vices by which we attain unto them.⁶⁴

The members of the court are thus presented as pursuing both interest and vice, which, it soon becomes apparent, are followed at the expense of the common good.

The court is full of those who seek favour, and there is nothing more advantageous to the king's power, than his arbitrary power to raise or lower his courtiers on a moment's whim. 'It is true', Philaethes claims, that 'there is something of baseness and meanness in submitting their honour and conscience to their interest, but they care not for that'.⁶⁵

Through the instruments of his court, the king is thereby able to maintain the people in a state of uncertainty and a complete helplessness with regards to their reputations, which he is able to promote or extinguish whenever he likes:

⁶³ Sidney 1996b, pp. 140-1.

⁶⁴ Sidney 1996a, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁵ Sidney 1996a, p. 68.

if they should grow discontented, they could do nothing to our prejudice. Nobody will follow them, if disappointed of their court end, in such a private and corrupt interest. We give hopes to many of them, but satisfy few of their desires. But by hopes we keep the court full of persons of quality, and everyone endeavours to serve the king to the utmost that he may be advanced, and makes large presents to those ministers who may help them in their pretensions.⁶⁶

This is a notion that is repeated over and over in the *Discourses*, where Sidney wants to stress that emperors and kings can make use of ‘all manner of excesses’ to which men are prone.⁶⁷

Thus, the corruption of an absolute monarch is to be contrasted with the united interests of a people and a popular government:

Vices may be profitable to private men, but they can never be so to the government, if it be popular or mixed: No people was ever the better for that which renders them weak or base; and a duly created magistracy, governing a nation, with their consent, can have no interest distinct from that of the publick, or desire to diminish the strength of the people, which is their own, and by which they subsist. On the other side, the absolute monarch who governs for himself, and chiefly seeks his own preservation, looks upon the strength and bravery of his subjects as the root of his greatest danger and frequently desires to render them weak, base, corrupt, and unfaithful to each other, that they may neither dare to attempt the breaking of the yoke he lays upon them, nor trust one another in any generous design for the recovery of their liberty. So that the same corruption which preserves such a prince, if it were introduced by a people, would weaken, if not utterly destroy them.⁶⁸

Sidney singles out the figure of Julius Caesar, who he claims was a monarch unparalleled in ‘good qualities’, at least until these qualities ‘were extinguished by his ambition’. Because Caesar wished to possess power beyond that which had been delegated to him by the people, ‘he knew that his strength lay in the corruption of the people, and that he could not accomplish his designs without increasing it’.⁶⁹ This fact drives Sidney very

⁶⁶ Sidney 1996a, pp. 68-9.

⁶⁷ Sidney 1996b, p. 184-5.

⁶⁸ Sidney 1996b, p. 185.

⁶⁹ Sidney 1996b, p. 186.

quickly to the conclusion that the people must have its own militia to defend their interests.

The free and secure state must be one that relies on its own arms, since ‘such as serve for wages, often betray their masters in distress, and always want the courage and industry which is found in those who fight for their own interests, and are to have a part in the victory’.⁷⁰ When the *Discourses* was finally published in 1698, statements such as this would have been seen as an eminent contribution to the debate concerning standing armies. But in the context of its composition, the reference must be seen as intentionally *Machiavellian*. This conclusion is reinforced just a few pages later, where Sidney argues that commonwealths are much better prepared for war than absolute monarchies:

If all governments whether monarchical or popular, absolute or limited, deserve praise or blame as they are well or ill constituted for making war; and that the attainment of this end do entirely depend upon the qualifications of the commanders, and the strength, courage, number, affection, and temper of the people, that they may daily increase in number, courage and strength, and be so satisfied with the present state of things, as to fear a change, and fight for the preservation or advancement of the publick interest as of their own.⁷¹

The idea that the public interest has to be fought for *as though it were their own*, returns us to the republican conception we have already encountered in earlier chapters: the Ciceronian idea that the people must come to comprehend their own interest in that of the state. This does not happen naturally, but through socio-political engagement and artifice.

For Sidney there is the added necessity that the prince or monarch will find their interest to be bound up with the public interest. ‘The prince that sets up an interest in himself, becomes an enemy to the publick’, and this will cause him to become hated.⁷² Thus, it is important for him to stress that when monarchs depart from ‘the interest of

⁷⁰ Sidney 1996b, p. 198.

⁷¹ Sidney 1996b, pp. 212-13. See also Houston 1991, p. 166.

⁷² Sidney 1996b, p. 264.

the publick' they often find they have less power, rather than more.⁷³ From this very pragmatic point of view, it is to the prince's advantage to act for the good of his people:

By preferring the interest of the people before his own, he gains their affection, and all that is in their power comes with it; whilst he unites them to one another, he unites all to himself: In leading them to virtue, he increases their strength, and by that means provides for his own safety, glory and power.⁷⁴

It is only logical, Sidney contends, that if men are aware of 'the frailty of human nature' and only want to do what is good for themselves, they will 'be glad to be restrained from that which they ought not to do'.⁷⁵

On 7 December 1683, Sidney was executed, having been convicted of inciting revolt amongst the people. Why should our rulers 'not be deposed' he asks, 'if they become enemies of their people, and set up an interest in their own persons inconsistent with the publick good, for the promoting of which they were erected?'⁷⁶ As we saw in the case of Locke, the argument being put in order to justify resistance to the king, is that he is forming a separate interest, which is inconsistent with that of the people.

V

There were writers of the same genus who, while distinctly republican in their allegiances, had no such direct insurrectionary aims as Sidney. Among these the most prominent was Henry Neville, whose *Plato Redivivus* was published in 1681, but was available in manuscript in the height of the Exclusion Crisis in 1680.

In 1675, Neville had published a new translation of the works of Machiavelli. His translation was reprinted in 1680, with a fictional introduction entitled 'Nicolas Machiavel's Letter to Zanobius Buondelmontius in Vindication of himself and His Writings', dated 1 April 1537. It was then reprinted on at least three more occasions, in

⁷³ Sidney 1996b, p. 252.

⁷⁴ Sidney 1996b, pp. 432-3.

⁷⁵ Sidney 1996b, p. 523.

⁷⁶ Sidney 1996b, p. 226.

1694, 1695, and 1720. It should therefore be considered of utmost importance as an expression of late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century English republicanism. The letter itself was easy to identify as a fabrication, but some may have believed that Neville had brought it in manuscript from his time spent in self-imposed Italian exile. It was republished in 1689 and 1691 in a much expanded edition, most likely not by Neville, but by Thomas Wharton.⁷⁷

Neville maintains a strong allegiance to the idea that the Romans' constitution was the source of their virtue. His Machiavelli argues that 'the improvement which Mankind, and as I may so say, humane nature it self obtained amongst the *Romans*, did proceed naturally from their Government, and was but a plain effect and consequence of the perfection of their Common-wealth'.⁷⁸ It is for this reason that he feels safe to commend 'Democracy founded upon good orders' as 'the best and most excellent Government', and that those who disagree with him would consist of 'none but Flatterers and Sophisters'.⁷⁹ He points to the mixed commonwealth of the Hebrew republic – 'wherein the *Sanbadrim* or *Senate*, and the Congregation or *popular Assembly* had their share' – and to the fact that God had punished the people when they had asked for an absolute monarch to rule over them.⁸⁰

Neville's Machiavelli goes on to defend his position against those who have accused him of inciting rebellion. Rebellions consist, he argues, not merely in 'rising in Arms against any Government we live under', but also in 'clandestine Conspiracies too, by which the peace and quiet of any Country may be interrupted, and thereby the Lives and Estates of innocent persons endangered'.⁸¹ Such rebellion 'is an offence which will be committed whilst the world lasts, as often as Princes tyranize, and by enslaving and

⁷⁷ Robbins 1969, p. 15.

⁷⁸ Neville 1680, sig. *, 4^r.

⁷⁹ Neville 1680, sig. *, 4^r.

⁸⁰ Neville 1680, sig. *, 4^v.

⁸¹ Neville 1680, sig. *, 4^v.

oppressing their Subjects make Magistracy, which was intended for the benefit of Mankind, prove a Plague and Destruction to it'.⁸² There can be little doubt that Neville is referring to the conspiracy of the king and his brother to impose arbitrary government on the people of England.

Furthermore, for as long as this kind of conspiring against the commonwealth continues to occur, 'it is impossible that humane Nature' – consisting 'of passion as well as virtue' – could endure 'the greatest cruelty and injustice, whenever either the weakness of their Princes, the unanimity of the people, or any other favourable accident' might promise to 'provide better for their own interest by insurrection'.⁸³ This fictional incarnation of Machiavelli has a concern that we do not find in the Italian Machiavelli of the early sixteenth century: he says that his 'only scope and design is to promote the interest and welfare of mankind'.⁸⁴ This concern for the 'interests of men' indicates a broader project than the one originally undertaken by Machiavelli in his political texts, and reminds us of the beginnings of a republican political science in the pages of *Oceana*.

The similarity of *Plato Redivivus* with Harrington's *Oceana* was immediately apparent to its readers, and in 1737 the two books were published in the same volume in Dublin.⁸⁵ The main connection with Harrington is Neville's insistence on the idea that to maintain a stable polity requires a balance of property. None will be able to maintain 'settled government, except they have the rule who possess the country'.⁸⁶ The only reason for the Roman republic's degeneration into the empire was, he explains, because its Agrarian Law did not last.⁸⁷ Thus, 'alteration of property ... is the only corruptor of politics', and

⁸² Neville 1680, sig. *, 4v.

⁸³ Neville 1680, sig. *, 4v.

⁸⁴ Neville 1680, sig. **, 4r.

⁸⁵ Robbins 1959, pp. 33-4.

⁸⁶ Neville 1969, p. 94.

⁸⁷ Neville 1969, pp. 96-7.

in city-republics such as Florence, changes in property could only be made when ratified by a vote of the entire people.⁸⁸

Neville's closeness to Harrington is again betrayed by his insistence that England requires a fundamental alteration if it is to return to liberty and virtue. The character of the Doctor asks about the corruption of judges, which the English Gentleman dismisses as 'but the superstructure'. He insists that 'all will come right when our government is mended; and never before, though our judges were all angels'.⁸⁹ Only laws have the ability to rescue the commonwealth, and not the virtue of its magistrates. The method by which the English constitution is to be mended, is only through the king giving up, by his 'free consent', all those prerogative powers that relate to the 'lives, liberties and estates' of his subjects.⁹⁰

In the second dialogue, the English Gentleman describes the contemporary constitution of English government, and how well it apportions the various powers. 'Whatever powers are in the crown', he argues, 'whether by state or by old prescription, they are, and must be understood to be entrusted to the prince for the preservation of the government, and for the safety and interest of the people'.⁹¹ However, it is clear that the author has different ideas, and in the third dialogue Neville points to the four areas in which the king's prerogative needs to be limited. These are 'the ability to make war and peace', 'the ordering of the militia by sea and land', the appointment of ministers, and 'the laying out and employing, as he pleases, all the public revenues of the crown or kingdom'.⁹²

Neville's English Gentleman argues that there are two crucial measures that need to be taken in order to ensure that England's laws will be properly executed. These are the

⁸⁸ Neville 1969, pp. 101-2.

⁸⁹ Neville 1969, pp. 131-2.

⁹⁰ Neville 1969, pp. 175-7, 184-5.

⁹¹ Neville 1969, pp. 125-6.

⁹² Neville 1969, pp. 185-6.

annual succession of parliaments, and that the lords are released from their dependence on the patronage of the monarch.⁹³ As for Harrington, these very basic devices are designed to ensure that the rulers do not have an interest in abusing their power. This is particularly important since the constitution proposed allows the House of Lords to retain a negative voice, and thereby opens up the possibility ‘that the lords should frustrate their [the Commons’] endeavours for the people’s good’. ‘This objection will vanish’, Neville argues, when we consider ‘that when this new constitution is admitted, the lords cannot have any interest or temptation to differ with the commons in anything wherein the public good is concerned’.⁹⁴ Neville argues that this is not possible in the present state of the constitution, for the very reason that ‘the great counsellors and officers which sit in that house do suggest, (whether true or false,) that it is against his majesty’s will and interest that such an act should pass’.⁹⁵

The end of *Plato Redivivus* is quite bleak. Neville blames the distrust that parliament has for those over whom it rules, and the general lack of virtue among the populous: ‘most of the wise men of this kingdom are very silent’.⁹⁶ For this reason, he argues that England is ‘not ripe yet for any great reform’.⁹⁷ Despite such lacklustre however, we can see that Neville conforms to the republican conception of interest that we have so far encountered.

VI

I now turn to the years following the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9, in which, many hoped, the values of limited and mixed monarchy would become enshrined in England.

⁹³ Neville 1969, pp. 191-2.

⁹⁴ Neville 1969, p. 193.

⁹⁵ Neville 1969, p. 194.

⁹⁶ Neville 1969, pp. 196-200.

⁹⁷ Neville 1969, p. 196.

However, as we shall see, many thinkers continued to perceive a dangerous potential for government to form itself into a separate interest from the people.

The worry that the interest of the king somehow becomes ‘separate’ from that of the state, or the people, is also a theme of Robert Molesworth’s *An Account of Denmark* (1694). The account he gives is of the degeneration of the Danish mixed constitution into monarchy in 1660. Molesworth depicts the traditional arrangement as one in which ‘frequent meetings of the Estates was a part of the very Fundamental Constitution’, and that such meetings ensured good laws, and that tax was only exacted with the people’s consent. The king is described as having little more power than ‘one of our Modern Noblemen’, and the constitution is set up in such a way that ‘it was his Interest, as well as his Duty, to keep fair with his Nobility and Gentry, and to be careful of the Plenty and Prosperity of his Commons’. In other words, it is his interest to serve the interests of his people.⁹⁸

In a tragic turn of events, the various estates of Denmark are either convinced or coerced into subordinating themselves to the monarchy by swearing an oath in which they promise to ‘Endeavour, and Promote Your Majesties Interest in all things, and to the best of my Power defend you from all Danger and Harm’.⁹⁹ Molesworth describes how ‘the King thought it for his Interest (and that is esteemed reason enough with most Princes) to be Master of the whole Country’.¹⁰⁰ The point he makes here is surely that the virtue of the prince is not to be trusted to keep out corruption, and that the people need to remain keenly aware of the fragility of their liberty.

In 1711, following his ejection from the Commons in the midst of the Tory landslide of 1710, Molesworth published a translation of François Hotman’s classic monarchomach text, *Francogallia*. He includes a preface in which he undertakes to

⁹⁸ Molesworth 2011, p. 51.

⁹⁹ Molesworth 2011, p. 63.

¹⁰⁰ Molesworth 2011, p. 127.

describe the principles and opinions of a ‘real Whig’, and the text was published under the title of *The Principles of a Real Whig* in 1775. In his preface, Molesworth stresses that ‘an English Whig can never be so unjust to his Country, and to right Reason, as not to be of Opinion, that in al Civil Commotions, which side soever is the wrongful Aggressor, is accountable for all the evil Consequences’.¹⁰¹ Thus, he continues to write in the tone that was prevalent during the crisis of 1679-81.

More generally, Molesworth argues that when a ‘Man’s Life, Substance, and Liberty be under the Protection of Laws ... he will never be in a different Interest, nor willing to quit this Protection, or exchange it for Poverty, Slavery and Misery’.¹⁰² Again, the clear suggestion is that the equality of the various individuals under the law will make it everyone’s interest to obey. In addressing the government, he reminds them that ‘it is so much more desirable and secure to govern by Love and common Interest, than by Force’.¹⁰³ Thus, ‘no true Englishman will grudge to pay Taxes whilst he has a Penny in his Purse, as long as he sees the Publick Money well laid out for the great Ends for which it is given’.¹⁰⁴ And, since it is the role of government to serve the ends determined by those who are governed, ‘a right Whig lays no Stress upon the Illegitimacy of the pretended Prince of Wales’. This is not because the ‘right Whig’ has a particular opinion on where the hereditary right properly lies, but because ‘he thinks no Prince fit to govern, whose Principle it must be to ruin the Constitution, as soon as he can acquire just power to do so’.¹⁰⁵ Thus we find, following the Revolution, the continuing assertion that the people must take steps to maintain the identity of their rulers with the interests of the people.

¹⁰¹ Molesworth 2011, pp. 175-6.

¹⁰² Molesworth 2011, p. 179.

¹⁰³ Molesworth 2011, p. 182.

¹⁰⁴ Molesworth 2011, p. 190.

¹⁰⁵ Molesworth 2011, p. 188.

It is said that the years 1697-1700 saw the formation of something approaching a ‘canon’ of whig texts.¹⁰⁶ In 1698, Neville’s *Plato Redivivus* was posthumously republished under the title *Discourses Concerning Government*, a move specifically designed to relate it to the publication of Sidney’s work of the same name, which was also published in that year.¹⁰⁷ The year 1699 saw the publication of Walter Moyle’s *Essay on the Constitution and Government of the Roman State*.

There are some echoes of the old distinction between the interest of the people and the interest of the nobility or king. Walter Moyle puts it exactly this way: ‘independence being the interest of the many, and monarchy but of the few’.¹⁰⁸ By ‘independence’, Moyle is clearly referring to the kind of independence only achieved by an absence of arbitrary power. The liberty of the people is not only conceived as fundamentally opposed to the interests of monarchs, but indeed to the interest of any ‘aspiring faction’.¹⁰⁹ But, at the same time, in his discussion of the Roman monarchy, Moyle has some praise for the institution of ‘elective monarchs’, who he says ‘have a nearer interest not to invade the liberties of their country’.¹¹⁰ ‘Elective monarchy’, we are told, ‘is less dangerous to the liberties of the people’, since they are orientated towards ‘the interest and advantage of the people’ and ‘not calculated to support the grandeur and authority of the crown’.¹¹¹ It is only when such a monarchy becomes an hereditary institution (which is necessitated by the imperative of expansion) that liberty begins to be undermined. This is because, for as long as monarchies are elective, the people are able to hold their rulers accountable, and therefore the monarch has an immediate interest in serving the common good. Moyle also argues that the elective monarch is not able to ‘wield the same authority as a hereditary one’ because he (or she) has to appeal to the ‘votes and interests

¹⁰⁶ Skinner 2002a, pp. 355-7; Worden 1994b, p. 177.

¹⁰⁷ Neville 1698.

¹⁰⁸ Moyle 1969, pp. 228-9.

¹⁰⁹ Moyle 1969, pp. 237-8.

¹¹⁰ Moyle 1969, p. 228.

¹¹¹ Moyle 1969, pp. 226-7.

of the people' and therefore is 'unable to command the loyalty of the nobility as effectively'.¹¹²

As for earlier republicans, it is emphasised that it was crucial to remove the threat of private interests from the public sphere. This was particularly true when it came to standing armies, since such mercenary soldiers, with nothing to do during peacetime, posed a threat to the stability of the commonwealth. Andrew Fletcher, in his *Discourse of Government with Relation to Militias* (1698) argues that 'no well-constituted government ever suffered any such men in it, whose interest leads them to imbroil the state in war, and are a useless and insupportable burden in time of peace'.¹¹³

In their protest at the existence of the standing army in 1697, John Trenchard and Walter Moyle argue that it is the aristocracy's 'interest' to 'trim this Boat of our Commonwealth, and to skreen the People against the Insults of the Prince, and the Prince against the Popularity of the Commons, since if either Extream prevail so far as to oppress the other, they are sure to be overwhelmed in their Ruin'.¹¹⁴ In the same year, Moyle also published a translation of Xenophon's *Discourse upon Improving the Revenue of the State of Athens*, a work that was designed to show how the state was able to expand economically and at the same time maintain its civic virtue. (Indeed, the translation is dedicated to England's foremost political economist of the time, Charles Davenant.) Moyle uses his translation as an opportunity to stress the pre-eminence of citizen militias over mercenary armies.¹¹⁵

In 1700, John Toland was the first to publish a complete collection of Harrington's political works, some of which he claimed to be issuing for the first time from their original manuscripts. As well as a biography of Harrington, the collection is given a short preface dated October 1699. Toland argues that, in *Oceana*, Harrington has presented 'the

¹¹² Moyle 1969, pp. 227-8.

¹¹³ Fletcher 1997, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Trenchard and Moyle 1697, pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁵ Moyle 1727, pp. 6-7.

most perfect Form of Popular Government that ever was', but he is also keen to stress that the political writings 'contain the History, Reason, Nature and Effects of all sorts of Government'.¹¹⁶ Toland points out that 'the Commonwealthsman finds he enjoys Liberty under the security of equal Laws, and that the rest of the Subjects are satisfied to live under a Government which is a Monarchy in effect as well as in name'.¹¹⁷ To say that England is 'a Monarchy in effect as well as in name' is to suggest that Toland's republicanism does little to exclude the institution of monarchy.

Indeed, his own work, *The Art of Governing by Partys* (1701), is dedicated to William III. Having pointed to the conveniences of living in England, Toland argues that there are those in neighbouring countries living 'under the yoke of absolute dominion'.¹¹⁸ Living under this sort of subjection comes as a result of law being dictated by the will of the prince, and in which 'the Judges are obliged to interpret solely for his [the prince's] interest'.¹¹⁹ Toland argues that the act of a tyrant (as opposed to a virtuous monarch like William) 'purposely to divide the sentiments, affections, and interests of a People, that after they have mutually spent their Force against one another, they may the more easily become a common prey to Arbitrary Power'.¹²⁰ Continuing to praise England's monarchical republic, Toland argues that such government is 'calculated for the Interest of all the Parties concerned, which are all the Inhabitants of *England*'.¹²¹ Again we are presented with the image of a constitution in which the particular interests are made harmonious with the common good.

The formation and activities of factional parties are the antithesis to this process of calculation, and Toland praises William III, who has 'never yet degraded himself to becom [sic] the Head of any Party', and whose 'chiefest Care will be to bring us all into

¹¹⁶ Toland 1700, p. ix.

¹¹⁷ Toland 1700, p. viii.

¹¹⁸ Toland 1701, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁹ Toland 1701, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁰ Toland 1701, p. 7.

¹²¹ Toland 1701, pp. 31-2.

the same Interest, which is the only thing that can heal our Divisions'.¹²² Thus, for as long as the monarch does not make himself into a party separate from that of the people as a whole (and Toland is confident that William will not 'degrade himself' in this way), then the nation can continue to live at liberty.

Finally, in 1702, a treatise by Johan and Pieter de la Court was published for the first time in English. It had originally been a bestselling publication in Holland in 1660,¹²³ so we might conclude that its translation at this juncture is of some significance. The 1640s had seen an influx of the vocabulary of 'interest' into Dutch political writing, largely in the form of pamphlets and official documents produced in the context of the negotiations over the Treaty of Westphalia.¹²⁴ *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland and West Friesland* was originally published by way of speculation about the best foreign policy of Holland in the 1660s. However, it clearly had a more normative purpose for its early-eighteenth-century translator.

In true republican style, the brothers insist that the interests of governors and governed must be in alignment.¹²⁵ This is an imperative, rather than a mere statement of fact; in other words, like English republicans, the De la Courts want to argue that the only in a popular government will the public and private interest be the same. At the same time, they acknowledge that people will only ever serve the common good when it is in their private interests do so. Thus, 'the true Interest cannot be compassed by a Government, unless the generality of the People partake thereof'.¹²⁶ Like their English counterparts, the De la Courts are fearful of those 'Persons, who seek their Advantage to

¹²² Toland 1701, pp. 50-1.

¹²³ Weststeijn 2012, pp. 58-9.

¹²⁴ Weststeijn 2012, p. 45.

¹²⁵ De la Court 1702, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁶ De la Court 1702, pp. 1-2.

the Prejudice of *Holland*.¹²⁷ The ruler's interest cannot be allowed to become separated from the interest of the people.

They recognise the fact that there will be magistrates who exercise executive power, and whose ambition will have to be directed towards serving the common good. They also recognise that it is important that the people's ambition is not unlimited, since this will cause rebellion and instability.¹²⁸ Because 'the Publick is not regarded but for the sake of private Interest', so 'that is the best Government where the Chief Rulers may best obtain their own Welfare by that of the People'.¹²⁹ In other words, power must be arranged in order that it is in the ruler's interest to serve the common good.

VII

Shelley Burtt contends in *Virtue Transformed* that, following the Glorious Revolution, the republican ideal of naturally sociable individuals virtuously orientating themselves towards the public good became unrealistic. Instead, she argues, a number of writers developed the competing ideal of individuals pursuing private virtues that would serve the common good. She argues that in *Cato's Letters*, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon depart from the traditional republican response to the problem of a self-interested citizenry. For Burtt, what is 'unique about *Cato's Letters* is the idea that the pursuit of one's private interests can properly and effectively ground civically virtuous action'.¹³⁰ As we saw in chapter 3, Harrington also found himself forced to find a way in which to deal with a populace fundamentally driven by interests rather than duty or the innate desire to be virtuous. However, Harrington's solution relies on the perfect working of a utopian constitution, whereas 'Cato, by contrast, calls egoistic citizens themselves to civic virtue,

¹²⁷ De la Court 1702, p. 14.

¹²⁸ De la Court 1702, pp. 3-5.

¹²⁹ De la Court 1702, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁰ Burtt 1992, p. 74.

arguing that for statesman and citizen alike a devoted pursuit of their own self-interest can produce behaviour that is a genuine expression of civic virtue'.¹³¹

There are several objections to this interpretation of *Cato's Letters*. The first, and most basic, is that all commonwealth men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were prepared to accept that individual human beings were capable of being corrupted by individual self-interest. So, in letter 38, Cato admits that 'it is certain that one man, and several men, may be bribed into an interest opposite to that of the publick'.¹³² But we must not forget that, for commonwealth men at this time, the whole body of the people was a creature that did not necessarily act as a straightforward multiplicity of individuals.

The quotation ends with the assertion that although some individuals may be bribed by interest, 'it is certain that a whole country can never find an equivalent for itself, and consequently a whole country cannot be bribed'.¹³³ Hence, Cato's letter 24 takes the title: "Of the natural Honesty of the People, and their reasonable Demands." Here, Cato argues that great men have, again and again, attempted to dissuade the people 'out of the open and plain paths of public virtue and public good'.¹³⁴ But he insists that, as a corporate body, the people 'can serve no end by faction; they have no interest, but the general interest'.¹³⁵ In a much later letter from September 1722, directed against standing armies, Cato argues that 'a whole people can have no ambition but to be governed justly', and asks rhetorically: 'Where do the people enter into mad wars against their interest?'¹³⁶

For this reason, Cato warns against the 'destructive Spirit of arbitrary Power', that in a 'free state', power is delegated in order 'to watch for the security, and pursue the interest of all', and that if that 'interest' is not 'obtained', then 'we know what opinion the people

¹³¹ Burt 1992, pp. 75-6.

¹³² Trenchard and Gordon 1995, vol. 1, no. 38 (22 July 1721), p. 272. [TG] [Henceforth, *Cato's Letters*.] I indicate in square brackets whether Trenchard (JT) or Gordon (TG) is the author of a specific letter.

¹³³ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 38, p. 272. [TG]

¹³⁴ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 24 (8 April 1721), p. 174. [TG]

¹³⁵ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 24, pp. 174-5. [TG]

¹³⁶ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 2, no. 94 (15 September 1722), pp. 671-3. [TG and JT]

will have of their governors'.¹³⁷ The inference is always that when the people are conceived as a whole body, they will have a singular interest – by being bound together in society – and therefore will understand their proper interests.

In letter 89, Trenchard makes the argument that men are often mistaken in what is in their interest, and fail to recognise their 'real interest'. They thereby pursue 'little views, whilst they lose great and substantial advantages'.¹³⁸ It soon becomes clear that Trenchard wants to express this notion of 'real interest' in the following way. Individuals have essentially two interests. One is subjective, based on whim and will often lead them into error. The other is the 'general' interest. This interest is still a property of the individual, but relies on men living in a commonwealth. In this way, letter 89 is full of 'instances of men, who, separating themselves from the publick, act against their own interest, by being too partial to it'.¹³⁹ This is directly applicable to politics in the sense that rulers will often forget that their interest is bound up with the interests of those they govern. Cato quotes Sallust to the effect that 'it is the interest of a virtuous prince to make his people virtuous'.¹⁴⁰ He goes on to describe how the 'governors and enemies of Rome destroy[ed] virtue to set up power'.¹⁴¹ Thus, 'it is the hard fate of the world, that there should be any difference in the views and interests of the governors and governed; and yet it is so in most countries'.¹⁴²

Cato counsels that 'the world is governed by men, and men by their passions', which must be controlled.¹⁴³ Human nature is not to be trusted, and Cato warns that 'ignorance' of human nature leads people 'to credulity, and to too great confidence in particular

¹³⁷ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 25 (15 April 1721), p. 179. [TG]

¹³⁸ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 2, no. 89 (11 August 1722), p. 638. [JT]

¹³⁹ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 2, no. 90 (18 August 1722), p. 643. [JT]

¹⁴⁰ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 27 (29 April 1721), p. 194. [TG]

¹⁴¹ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 27, pp. 194-5. [TG]

¹⁴² *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 25, p. 179. [TG]

¹⁴³ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 33 (17 June 1721), p. 238. [TG]

men'.¹⁴⁴ This is the warning we have heard many times before from earlier republicans; that we cannot allow certain men to retain power for too long without limitation or restraints. And again, the solution is to find some way of setting up a mechanism to remind politicians that it is in their interests to maintain their charges in virtue and freedom: 'the only security which we can have that men will be honest, is to make it their interest to be honest; and the best defence which we can have against their being knaves, is to make it terrible to them to be knaves.'¹⁴⁵ The solution offered (primarily by Gordon) is that the politicians role is to manipulate the interests of individuals in order that they are made to serve the common good.

In letter 40, Gordon appears to admit the case Burt argues for, by stating that 'we do not expect philosophical virtue from' mankind, having established that 'one man is only safe, while it is the interest of another to let him alone' and that 'men are very bad where they dare, and ... all men would be tyrants, and do what they please'.¹⁴⁶ The only solution offered is that we can only hope that men 'follow virtue as their interest and find it penal and dangerous to depart from it'.¹⁴⁷ However, although this appears to admit that the only route to virtue is private and self-interested, it is only so if considered in isolation from the corporate body of the people, and therefore isolated from their *real* interest.

Almost all the letters I have quoted so far have been from the pen of Thomas Gordon, but it is clear that Trenchard agrees. In letter 60, he argues that 'the only secret ... in forming a free government, is to make the interests of the governors and governed the same'. There is also a sense in which Trenchard is more explicit in the claim that this identity of interests is only possible 'as far as human policy can contrive'.¹⁴⁸ Cato's

¹⁴⁴ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 33 (17 June 1721), p. 238. [TG]

¹⁴⁵ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 33, p. 240. [TG]

¹⁴⁶ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 40 (5 August 1721), pp. 281-2. [TG]

¹⁴⁷ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 40 (5 August 1721), p. 282. [TG]

¹⁴⁸ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 60 (6 January 1722), p. 417. [JT]

readers are warned against submitting our judgments to other people's interests.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the people are advised to 'choose for [their] representatives men whose interests are blended with [their] own'.¹⁵⁰ They are told to avoid 'any sort of men, whose interest may, at any time, and in any circumstance, consist in confusion'.¹⁵¹ Hence, Cato echoes figures such as Sidney in repeatedly referring the government as the creature or instrument of society. The necessity of an inequality of power is 'common sense', as long as it is 'for the sake of society'; 'all governments', it is claimed 'under whatsoever form they are administered, ought to be administered for the good of the society'.¹⁵²

In letter 36, 'Of Loyalty', it is emphasised that the word itself has the power to intimidate us, since 'we have been formerly stunned with the big word *prerogative*, by those who contend for unlimited loyalty'. 'I know of no other prerogative in the crown', he insists, 'which is not at the same time a certain privilege of the people, for their sake granted, and for their sake to be exerted'. Furthermore, he goes on to argue that 'where a prerogative is claimed in opposition to the rights and interests of the people' – in other words, when it is used against its express purpose – this is called 'tyranny', which is 'nothing else but the government of one man, or of a few men, over many, against their inclination and interest'. In case this were not clear enough, Cato paraphrases this point again: 'Where prerogative is exercised more the hurt than the good of the governed, it is no longer prerogative, but violence and usurpation.'¹⁵³

In an early letter we find a discussion of the Roman institution of the dictatorship. The dictator was, for Cato, 'a great and extraordinary magistrate, vested with extraordinary power, as he was created on extraordinary exigencies', and it is stressed that his was only ever to protect *salus populi*. In particular, our attention is drawn to the

¹⁴⁹ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 47 (7 October 1721), pp. 319-20. [TG]

¹⁵⁰ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 2, no. 69 (10 March 1722), pp. 499-500. [JT]

¹⁵¹ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 2, no. 70 (17 March 1722), p. 513. [TG]

¹⁵² *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 45 (16 September 1721), pp. 306-10 [TG]; no. 59 (30 December 1721), p. 405 [JT].

¹⁵³ *Cato's Letters*, vol. 1, no. 36 (8 July 1721), p. 258. [TG]

necessity of ‘punishing great crimes’, and here it must be concluded that the authors have in mind the crimes with which they have been concerned in the first ten letters, namely the South Sea Bubble and its subsequent whitewash by Walpole’s government.¹⁵⁴

But this acknowledgement of the Roman constitutional protection is suggested to have been undermined by the reality of Roman history. Thus, ‘in England ... we have not delegated this power at all’, Cato declares, ‘because we very well know who must have had it, and what use would be made of it’. Although it is repeatedly stressed that power can be delegated in this way on ‘extraordinary occasions’, Cato seems concerned that the parliament should retain this power to itself for as long as it can.¹⁵⁵

In letter 19, we are given a very striking image of what happens when this kind of power is abused, which is juxtaposed to the image of a people very much aware of the danger of such corruption. In Machiavellian style, Cato begins a discussion of a people among whom ‘liberty is established’, and describes how such a people ‘have sense enough to know ... that they must labour and want, that others may be idle and abound; and they will see that their poverty is increased, and their miseries aggravated and mocked, by the pomp and luxury of their masters’. A people accustomed to living in liberty (such as the English?) will expect their rulers to be concerned only with the ‘public welfare and prosperity’:

A prince who deals thus with his people, can rarely be in danger from disaffected subjects, or powerful neighbours; his faithful people will be his constant guard; and finding their own security in his government, will be always ready at his call to take effectual vengeance upon those who shall attempt to oppose or undermine his just authority.¹⁵⁶

Since even ‘the wisest and most free people are not without their foibles’, rulers are always susceptible to abusing their offices.¹⁵⁷ Like Machiavelli, Cato describes how this

¹⁵⁴ *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 1, no.11 (7 January 1721), pp. 87-9. [TG]

¹⁵⁵ *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 1, no. 11, p. 93. [TG]

¹⁵⁶ *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 1, no. 19 (4 March 1721), pp. 134-5. [TG]

¹⁵⁷ *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 1, no. 19, p. 135. [TG]

will affect the rulers (or those who work for them) in the worst possible way: they will incur the ‘general distaste’ and the hatred of the people.¹⁵⁸ This brings us to a now very familiar conclusion: ‘when ministers have deservedly incurred the general hatred; when they have been known to have employed their own power and interest in opposition to the public interest’ and ‘thrived on the public ruin’, they would not be well served to attempt to continue to rule over such a public.¹⁵⁹ Thus, we are not to trust in the virtue of men to serve the interests of the public without some sanction in place.

In the midst of publishing *Cato’s Letters*, Gordon also composed a piece on the conspiracy of Catiline in ancient Rome. He opens his case with the distinction (as we found it in Neville’s Machiavelli) between conspiracies ‘formed and carried on against the Person of the *Prince*’ and those in which conspirators plot ‘against the *Commonwealth* or *People*’.¹⁶⁰ It is clear that Catiline’s crime was of the latter variety. At the end of his account of the conspiracy, Gordon quotes from Catiline’s speech to the rebels. ‘Look on the *Commonwealth*’, he implores his listeners, ‘as you would a *Prostitute*, that is enjoyed and defiled by each *contending Party*, as it is in their Turn to prevail’ and since ‘this is our turn ... let us keep her ours’.¹⁶¹ Gordon describes how Catiline ‘animates’ his audience ‘to the vilest Depredations and most flagrant Crimes, with Notions of Glory and Honour’.¹⁶² Indeed, he goes further than simply offering them glory and honour, since ‘he understood the depravity of their Nature, and knew how to strike it with all its Appetites’, and he goes on to tell them ‘of Wealth, of Power, and of Revenge; of raising their Interests, and destroying their Enemies’.¹⁶³ It is not clear whether Gordon thinks that Catiline would have been able to persuade just anyone to commit rebellion with such bait, or whether his attention was focussed on a particular class of individual. But what is

¹⁵⁸ *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 1, no. 19, p. 136. [TG]

¹⁵⁹ *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 1, no. 19, p. 136. [TG]

¹⁶⁰ [Gordon] 1721, p. 1.

¹⁶¹ [Gordon] 1721, p. 43.

¹⁶² [Gordon] 1721, p. 47.

¹⁶³ [Gordon] 1721, p. 47.

clear is that this kind of ‘sordid Interest’ came to govern men’s actions only when ‘Virtue and Honour no longer presided over publick Affairs’ and the ‘City was governed by Faction and Avarice’.¹⁶⁴ Thus the focus was not on the constitutional form of the commonwealth, merely on its degree of unity and its continual promotion of values like virtue and honour.

Ten years later, in one of the discourses appended to his translation of Tacitus’ *Histories*, Gordon begins a section ‘Of Princes’ by stating that ‘the duty of a Prince’ can be nothing but to obey the law, promote virtuous behaviour, and to consider himself the people’s servant.¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth I is therefore praised:

She never broke her faith with her People, never deceived them. They suspected her of no evil designs, as they saw she practised none, and were zealous for her glory, because her glory was for their good. They liked to see her great, since she sought no greatness which tended to make them less, none in which they had not a share. She retained their obedience by the strongest tie, that of their affections, their affections were engaged by the strongest and most natural bonds, those of their own interest; nor knew she what it was to have an interest distinct from theirs, much less an opposite interest.¹⁶⁶

For this reason, Gordon states, the Queen never had cause to clash with Parliament, and they had no cause to resist her prerogative.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, he refers to Henri IV of France, who ‘cheerfully lessened his revenue, lessened his authority, and restrained his prerogative’ when it ‘interefered with the interest and happiness of his People’.¹⁶⁸

VIII

In ending this chapter, I want to claim that the political leader of the country party in the 1720s and 1730s, Viscount Bolingbroke, continues to deploy the same way of talking about interests as we have found being used by commonwealth men and country

¹⁶⁴ [Gordon] 1721, p. 31.

¹⁶⁵ Gordon 1731, p. 37.

¹⁶⁶ Gordon 1731, p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Gordon 1731, p. 59.

¹⁶⁸ Gordon 1731, p. 41.

theorists throughout this chapter. The question of whether Bolingbroke can be considered part of the republican tradition has been hotly contested.¹⁶⁹ He certainly does not share all of its concerns, but the way he uses the concept of interest to express his opposition to the whig regime is consonant with the way in which the concept was used as far back as Shaftesbury in 1675.

In a manner we have already encountered with those writing in the context of the exclusion crisis, Bolingbroke characterises James, Duke of York, as having formed an interest that was separate from (and threatening to) the interest of the whole. Bolingbroke describes how ‘the long Parliament projected the exclusion’ and claims that ‘if the design had been carried on, in the spirit of a Country party, it would probably have been on with a national concurrence, and would consequently have succeeded in effect’.¹⁷⁰ The problem comes with the court’s ability to characterise the opposition as a ‘faction’. Since ‘a Country party must be authorised by the voice of the country’ and thereby ‘formed on principles of common interest’, the perception that they were only pursuing the interest of a faction makes failure inevitable.¹⁷¹

At the very opening of the sixth letter, Bolingbroke echoes Sidney in elevating ‘the real interest’ of the people over ‘the chimerical divine right’ of James. He insists that ‘if King Charles ... could have been prevailed upon to sacrifice’ the latter for the former, this ‘happy event would have made him ample amends in future ease and quiet, and the nation in future security, for all precedent disorders, dangers, and fears of danger’. He adds that Charles wrongly associated the legitimacy of his brother’s title with that of his own.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ On the debate about Bolingbroke’s republican credentials, see Colley 1982, pp. 91-2; Pocock 2003, p. 480; Skinner 2002a, pp. 344-67.

¹⁷⁰ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 35.

¹⁷¹ Bolingbroke 1997, pp. 36-7.

¹⁷² Bolingbroke 1997, p. 46.

Following the Revolution of 1688-9, Bolingbroke describes how the ‘mystery’ was removed from the English constitution:

the power of the crown is now exactly limited, the chimera of prerogative removed, and the rights of the subject are no longer problematical, though some things are necessary to the more effectual security of them may still be wanting. Under this constitution the greatest part of the men now alive were born. They lie under no pretence of obligation to any other, and to the support of this they are bound by all the ties of society, and all the motives of interest.¹⁷³

This was the ideal constitution for the English (subsequently *British*) and, as with earlier ideal constitutions put forward by republicans, it was one that tied the interests of the people to obedience and acquiescence.

Indeed, Bolingbroke does not want to say that the monarchy is useless, but that a proper balance was restored in 1689. He points to Roman history to prove this, arguing that the consuls were a continuation of monarchy, but simply in a frequently re-elected form: ‘There was so great a mixture of monarchical power in the Roman commonwealth, that Livy dates the original of liberty from the expulsion of the Tarquins, rather because the consular dignity was made annual, than because the regal power had suffered any diminution in that change.’¹⁷⁴ The limited and constrained monarchy which came into being in 1689, Bolingbroke argues, compels its subjects to obedience both through ‘duty’ and ‘motives of interest’.¹⁷⁵ However, since it is a matter of interest, this obligation lasts only as long as these ‘motives of interest’ are upheld. And this interest appears to be living in a state of liberty; for as long as we prefer liberty to slavery, Bolingbroke argues, we must find the new constitution to be to our advantage.¹⁷⁶

For our purposes, by far the most important section of *The Dissertation upon Parties* is the fourteenth letter, which appeared in *The Craftsman* in November 1734. Having spent

¹⁷³ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 78.

¹⁷⁴ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 129.

¹⁷⁵ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 82.

¹⁷⁶ Bolingbroke 1997, pp. 82-4.

the last two letters discussing the ‘defects’ in the ‘Roman constitution of government’, Bolingbroke suggests that such defects were in fact absent in the constitutions of those ‘that were established in the breaking of that empire’.¹⁷⁷ He describes the institution of the Castilian Cortes, which were autonomous assemblies, with a monetary income that was independent of the king: ‘he was not to name their president, nor even send letters unopened to any of them. No money could be raised on the subjects, without the consent of this assembly’.¹⁷⁸

Bolingbroke then proceeds to show how this institution was undermined by bribery, gifts and promises, despite its constitutional status. Eventually, one king is allowed to raise money without the immediate consent of the Cortes, thereby setting a precedent and making it ‘a prevailing argument in favour of every other king’.¹⁷⁹ Bolingbroke points out how dangerous it is to set this precedent:

Such is the merit of every prince who fills a throne, or rather such is the servile adulation paid to power, in what hands soever it be lodged, that general and almost universal experience shows this rule, which no man of sense would break in the management of his private interests, absolutely reversed in the management of the most important, national interests.¹⁸⁰

Bolingbroke may here be seen as making the inverse argument to that of Hobbes. Like Hobbes, he recognises that the king’s private interest is the same as his public interest (and, again, by ‘public’ is here meant the interest of his office, rather than that of the people). Hobbes had contended that this was an argument for the superiority of monarchy as a form of government.

By contrast, Bolingbroke wants to say that this identity of interests is potentially of great danger, since it prevents the king from making sacrifices for his public role:

¹⁷⁷ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 132.

¹⁷⁸ Bolingbroke 1997, pp. 132-3.

¹⁷⁹ Bolingbroke 1997, pp. 133-4.

¹⁸⁰ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 134.

The regal power resides in one person. The other shares of the supreme power are assigned to bodies of men. From hence it follows that the interest of the king, and the interest of the crown, cannot well be divided in the mind of the prince; whereas the interest of each individual may be distinguished from the interest of the nobility or of the commons, and still more from that of the nation, in the minds of those who compose an house of peers, or who are representatives of the people. A king cannot be tempted to give up the interest of the crown, because he cannot give up this public interest, without giving up his private interest; whereas the members of such assemblies may promote their private interest, by sacrificing it to that of the public.¹⁸¹

The problem is that, although the nobility have the ability to sacrifice their private interests to the public, when the Cortes fell into corruption, ‘the nobility was detached from the common interest by titles, places, pensions and grants’, and thereby ‘the nation was sacrificed for a faction, and an excellent constitution destroyed, in favour of a profligate government’.¹⁸²

Bolingbroke emphasises that it is the role of the nobility to protect the liberty of the people. ‘There cannot be a great solecism’, he argues, ‘than that of a nobility, under monarchical government, who suffer the liberty of the commons to be taken away’.¹⁸³ He describes that it is ‘both the duty and interest of the nobility’ not only ‘to oppose the excesses of the commons’, but also to limit the power of the monarchy: ‘therefore I have spoken of this second estate in our government as of a middle order, that are properly mediators between the other two, in the eye of our constitution’.¹⁸⁴

Letter 14 ends with Bolingbroke arguing that the apparent threat of the people’s ‘tyranny, under pretence of excluding slavery’ is in fact a chimera, a fabrication of the court’s grip on the nobility. In other words, the people only feel threatened in the possession of their liberty because the nobility are not fulfilling their role as protectors of

¹⁸¹ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 136.

¹⁸² Bolingbroke 1997, pp. 137-8.

¹⁸³ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 139.

¹⁸⁴ Bolingbroke 1997, p. 140.

that liberty against the incursions of the king.¹⁸⁵ Pocock argues that ‘Bolingbroke was driven to stake his intellectual and rhetorical all on the concept of virtue’ and that this had overtly *political* consequences.¹⁸⁶ What is remarkable, is that the *Dissertation* does not yield any kind of mechanism by which the particular interests of individuals might be harnessed or manipulated in order that they serve the common good. Rather, the pure virtue of the nobility is summoned as the only defence against the government forming an interest separate from that of the people.

IX

This chapter has traced the developments in the use of the vocabulary of interests by writers of the commonwealth between 1673 and 1733. Separated by a period of sixty years, these thinkers were not operating under the same conditions, and yet all imagined themselves to be part of a community that was protecting the liberty of the English constitution. This leads us quite fittingly to the subject of the next chapter, Bernard Mandeville, who is traditionally seen as one of the foremost critics of commonwealth values and enemy of the country party. He provides a novel defence of the economic policies of the government, which rests on a conception of human nature that is vicious. These vices are to be harnessed by the ingenious ruler in order that they serve the public good. I shall argue that in this harnessing and manipulation of particular interests by the ingenious politician, Mandeville owes much more to these theories than has so far been appreciated.

¹⁸⁵ Bolingbroke 1997, pp. 141-2.

¹⁸⁶ Pocock 2003, pp. 485-6.

Bernard Mandeville and the de-moralization of interests

I

We have just encountered the claim that the political corruption endemic in sustaining the modern economy led to tyranny and oppression. This chapter will consider instead the most radical defender of the very corruption that the opponents of the court condemned. In his most famous work, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Public Benefits*, Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) argues that the private vices of individuals, rather than acting to the detriment of the commonwealth, will in fact strengthen it. That he makes this claim is undisputed among commentators. The aim of this chapter is to seek to understand what this means with regard to the private interests of individuals.

Although much has been published on Mandeville's conception of self-love, and how this relates to the development of society, little has been written about his talk of interest(s). It might be speculated that this is due to the fact that many commentators simply collapse interest and self-interest, which, in turn, is seen as merely another way of expressing the notion of self-love. As I have argued, to confuse these two categories is to make a serious mistake. Although many writers in the following century would conflate interest and self-love, this is not something that Mandeville does.

The two aspects of Mandeville's political and moral thought that I want to emphasise in this chapter are epitomised by two quotations I take from the final pages of *The Fable*. The first is the very final sentence, in which the author brings us back to the subtitle of the book: 'I leave him [the reader] with regret, and conclude with repeating the seeming Paradox, the Substance of which is advanced in the Title Page: that Private Vices by the dextrous Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits.'¹

¹ Mandeville 1723, p. 428. In the absence of an easily accessible modern critical edition, I refer to the original publication. I focus on the 1723 edition since this is the edition that garners such attention, and (unlike the 1714 edition) represents Mandeville's thought at its most mature stage.

Mandeville does not have the same conception as later thinkers, that by pursuing our private interests we automatically serve the common good. Rather, politicians and leaders are required to manipulate particular interests in order that they serve the common good. So, we will be considering the republican tradition with which Mandeville is in part engaging, and show that although both Mandeville and the republicans argue that interests should be manipulated into serving the common good, Mandeville conceives of this in a very different way.

The second aspect to which I want to draw attention is summed up just a few lines earlier:

I flatter myself to have demonstrated that, neither the Friendly Qualities and kind Affections that are natural to Man, nor the real Virtues, he is capable of acquiring by Reason and Self-Denial, are the foundation of Society; but that what we call Evil in this World, Moral as well as Natural, is the grand Principle that makes us Sociable Creatures, the solid Basis, the Life and Support of all Trades and Employments without exception.²

The significance of this passage is to stress that morality and politics are entirely divorced, and this is reflected in Mandeville's use of the vocabulary of interest. Interests may be virtuous, and they may not. It is for this reason that I refer to the 'demoralization of interests' in the title of this chapter; whereas the men of latitude had argued that virtue and interest are identical, Mandeville vehemently denies this: if we are determined to serve our particular interests, he argues, we shall have to be prepared to act without virtue.

In sections II-IV of this chapter, I shall give an account of two strands of the thought Mandeville was attempting to undermine in his writing. I do not have space here to give a full account of Mandeville's context. I am only able to analyse the thought of the third earl of Shaftesbury, and the authors of the two journals, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, which appeared between 1709 and 1714. These thinkers engage with the latitudinarian

² Mandeville 1723, pp. 428-9.

assertion that interests are concurrent with virtue, and at some points they follow this way of thinking. At other points they seem to suggest that there is a natural identity between particular interests and the common good, though they do not do so consistently. What they share is a concern that it is necessary to defend the notion that there is an intrinsic moral value to things, and that this is a measure by which all interests must be judged. In the remaining sections of the chapter, I shall show how Mandeville achieves the ‘de-moralization’ of interests, by denying that interests are to be judged by such intrinsic moral values.

II

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), published a collected edition of all his published works in 1711, entitled *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. We have already encountered Shaftesbury’s grandfather, the first earl, as the leader of the whig opposition to the absolutism and Catholicism of James II. The grandson was no less whiggish than the grandfather. On hearing of the Glorious Revolution in 1689, Shaftesbury wrote to his father, the second earl (the first having died in 1683), elated by ‘our later purges from those promoters of that interest that was to have enslaved us the horriddest of all religions and to the usurpations and treacheries of that neighbouring crown [Louis XIV of France] that has so long aimed at the subjection of all Europe’.³ Shaftesbury’s project was less overtly political than his grandfather’s but (as I shall show) it bares a strong Ciceronian influence, in that he wants to show how the particular interests of individuals are to be brought into concurrence with the common good through a process of civic engagement.

Perhaps Shaftesbury’s most significant influence (with whom he does not always agree) is his tutor, John Locke. Shaftesbury was opposed to Locke’s lack of concern with

³ Shaftesbury to the second earl (3 May 1689) in Shaftesbury 1900, pp. 275-80. See also Klein 1999, p. xvii.

the internal operations of the human mind. He argues that, although Hobbes was responsible for undermining legitimate government, it was Locke who ‘struck at all fundamentals, threw all order and virtue out of the world, and made the very ideas of these (which are the same as those of God) *unnatural*, and without foundation in our minds’.⁴ Although it may be hard to agree with his assertion that, because he cannot conceive of belief in God as an innate idea, Locke does not put such ideas within the realm of nature, Shaftesbury’s objections to Locke’s empiricism are instructive in their rival theories of the role of interests in moral action. As far as Shaftesbury was concerned, Locke ‘gave up an Argument of the *Deity*’, and had thereby reduced morality to a mere custom.⁵

Shaftesbury is primarily concerned with proving that men are naturally sociable, and driven by a ‘natural affection’ to benefit others and contribute to the common good. ‘To have natural affection’, Shaftesbury argues, ‘is to affect according to nature or the design and will of nature’, and he cites a parent’s love of their child as evidence of such an affection.⁶ He challenges his readers to discover a better rule, which does not reduce human beings to the level of ‘beasts and the common creatures’, and asks: ‘Which are the happiest, or in the best state, those that live orderly and obey these affections, or those that are hardened against nature and have all of this kind unnatural and in disorder?’⁷ The main point here is that we are happiest when we follow these ‘natural affections’.

In his *Philosophical Regimen*, Shaftesbury relates his notion of natural affection directly to the stoic ideal:

If all things in the universe are for the good of one another, all united and conspiring to one end, all alike subject to one wise and perfect rule, all alike produced from one original and fountain: it follows that I must in a certain manner

⁴ [Shaftesbury] 1716, p. 39. See also Darwall 1995, pp. 176-8.

⁵ [Shaftesbury] 1714, p. 40.

⁶ Shaftesbury 1900, p. 3.

⁷ Shaftesbury 1900, pp. 3-4.

be reconciled to all things, love all things, and absolutely hate or abhor absolutely nothing whatsoever that has being in the world.⁸

The consequence of this is that ‘if I have friends, I act the part of a friend; if I am a father, the part of a father’ and ‘if I have a city or country, I study its good and interest; I cherish it as I ought; I hazard myself and so all for it that in me lies’.⁹ Despite his clearly cosmopolitan ontology, Shaftesbury also wants to emphasise the value of living in a specific country. Early in *Characteristics*, he argues that ‘universal good, or the interest of the world in general, is a kind of remote philosophical object’, and that in a particular polity or state we ‘can better taste society and enjoy the common good and interest of a more contracted public’.¹⁰ Thus, Shaftesbury gestures towards the reality that it is only within particular political communities that we are most capable of *perceiving* our interests as being contained in the common good.

Shaftesbury repeats the spirit that Cicero had expressed in *De officiis*, arguing that ‘in a civil state or public we see that a virtuous administration and an equal and just distribution of rewards and punishments is of the highest service’ and the way to achieve this is ‘not only by restraining the vicious and forcing them to act usefully to society, but by making virtue to be apparently the interest of everyone, so as to remove all prejudices against it’.¹¹ Cicero, too, had argued that it is the role of the polity to tell us that our private interests *ought* to coincide with the common good:

This, then, ought to be the chief end of all men, to make the utility of each individual and of the whole body politic identical. For if the individual appropriates to selfish ends what should be devoted to the common good, all human fellowship will be destroyed.¹²

⁸ Shaftesbury 1900, p. 5.

⁹ Shaftesbury 1900, p. 6.

¹⁰ Shaftesbury 1999, pp. 51-2.

¹¹ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 186.

¹² Cicero 1913, pp. 292-3: ‘Ergo unum debet esse omnibus propositum, ut eadem sit utilitas unius cuiusque et universorum; quam si ad se quisque rapiet dissolvitur omnis consortio.’ Cf. Cicero 1991, pp. 109-10.

In other words, there is a need for the body politic to be ordered in such a way that individuals perceive it to be their interest to serve it.¹³

In *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit*, Shaftesbury argues that the only ‘case’ in which we can ‘call any creature worthy or virtuous’ is that in which ‘it can have the notion of a public interest and can attain the speculation or science of what is morally good or ill, admirable or blameable, right or wrong’.¹⁴ He claims that ‘if there be found in any creature a more than ordinary self-concernment or regard to private good, which is inconsistent with the interest of the species or public, this must in every respect be esteemed an ill and vicious affection’.¹⁵ Thus, ‘the heart ... however false or corrupt it be within itself ... in all disinterested cases, must approve in some measure what is natural and honest, and disapprove what is dishonest and corrupt’.¹⁶ A synthesis of these various comments allows us to come to the conclusion that, for Shaftesbury, in order to perform truly moral actions, we have to disinterestedly perceive what is in the public interest.

In the second book of *An Inquiry*, Shaftesbury points out that this is not the way many people see the universe. ‘According to a known way of reasoning on self-interest’ he points out, ‘that which is of a social kind in us [i.e. natural sociability and thereby moral sense] should of right be abolished’.¹⁷ Those who adhere to such an ‘extraordinary hypothesis’ are likely to argue that ‘the interest of the private nature is directly opposite to that of the public one’.¹⁸ Shaftesbury conceives that it is his task in writing to correct this assumption, by endeavouring ‘to demonstrate, so as to make appear that ... to be well affected towards the public interest and one’s own is not only consistent but

¹³ Cf. Schneewind 1998, p. 306.

¹⁴ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 173.

¹⁵ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 170.

¹⁶ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 173.

¹⁷ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 193.

¹⁸ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 193.

inseparable’.¹⁹ Again, I want to emphasize the notion here: that the conformity of interests and the common good has to be *demonstrated*, and *made to appear*.

At one stage, Shaftesbury argues that any extension of sympathy that is not to *all* of the rest of mankind – any ‘partial affection, or social love in part’ – must ultimately constitute ‘an absolute contradiction’.²⁰ Indeed, at this stage he probably has in mind the prevalent ideological suspicion of factions and parties, which were perceived to have such a pernicious effect in British politics. ‘The very spirit of faction’, Shaftesbury argues, ‘seems to be no other than the abuse or irregularity of that social love and common affection which is natural to mankind’.²¹

In the “Miscellany” to *Characteristics*, Shaftesbury demonstrates most clearly his hostility towards private interests that we do not necessarily encounter earlier. The objects of his criticism in the third miscellany are those in the political elite who are prepared to sacrifice their ‘inward merit, honour and character’, in exchange for the ‘Equipages, titles, precedencies, staffs, ribbons and other such glittering ware’ (in other words, the paraphernalia) attached to places at court.²² Shaftesbury also claims that those who follow ‘an imaginary private interest’ will ultimately end up as miserable and unfulfilled as human beings:

When induced to change their honest measures and sacrifice their cause and friends to an imaginary private interest, they will soon find, by experience, that they have lost the relish and taste of life and, for insipid, wretched honours of a deceitful kind, have unhappily exchanged an amiable and sweet honour, of a sincere and lasting relish and good savour.²³

For Shaftesbury, therefore, despite an adherence to the conviction that our natural ‘moral sense’ will normally make moral action serve our temporal interests, human beings are still fallible, and have no guarantee that serving their private interests will contribute to

¹⁹ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 193.

²⁰ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 204.

²¹ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 53.

²² Shaftesbury 1999, p. 410.

²³ Shaftesbury 1999, p. 410.

the common good. This final point comes to be particularly important in contrasting Shaftesbury's philosophy with that of Joseph Butler, which we shall encounter in the next chapter.²⁴ For our purposes in this chapter, however, it is simply necessary to show that Shaftesbury argues for the existence of a traditional standard of virtue, which (whether it coincides with our interests or not) is unbiased and unmovable.

III

Mandeville produced his first Anglophone works in response to a particular version of moral and political rhetoric, whose major proponent in the early-eighteenth century (other than Shaftesbury) was the fictional figure of Isaac Bickerstaff. Bickerstaff had originally been created by the author Jonathan Swift, appearing in his *Predictions for the Year 1708*, published in January of that year.²⁵ Bickerstaff was intended by Swift as a satirical character, and his primary design was to predict the death of the almanac-maker, astrologer and free-thinker, John Partridge. He then became the fictional author of Richard Steele's *Tatler* magazine, which ran thrice weekly from April 1709 until January 1711.

Goldsmith argues that 'Bickerstaff could be for public and for private virtue because it was widely accepted that these were both desirable and compatible'.²⁶ Indeed, Bickerstaff likes to refer to himself as a 'Censor' for his readers. He argues that the British people are in need of some form of moral regulation, given the freedom in which they live: 'in a Nation of Liberty, there is hardly a Person in the whole Mass of People more absolutely necessary than a Censor'.²⁷ The implication is, of course, that people are not to be trusted with their liberty without some reminders as to the moral consequences

²⁴ See chapter 7 below.

²⁵ Swift 1708.

²⁶ Goldsmith 2001, p. 32.

²⁷ *The Tatler*, no. 144 (11 March 1710), vol. 2, 318. I have taken the author of *The Tatler* to be Richard Steele, unless otherwise indicated, according to Donald Bond's attributions, contained in his multivolume edition here cited.

of their actions. The first specific example of this is the inequality between rich and poor, which comes about because ‘every Man takes it in his Head, That he has a Liberty to spend his Money as he pleases’.²⁸

Bickerstaff compares himself with Cato the Elder, who was a candidate for the Roman Censorship, and who set himself against those ‘who offered themselves and, to get an Interest among the People, gave them great Promises of the mild and gentle Treatment which they would use towards them in that Office’. In contrast to these other candidates – and ‘because he knew the Age was sunk in Immorality and Corruption’ – Cato offers himself as a strict and severe Censor, with only the common good as his goal.²⁹ Within the world constructed inside the journal, Bickerstaff’s moral mission becomes quasi-judicial. When Addison and Steele wrote together, it is most likely to constitute an account of ‘the Proceedings of the Court of Honour’, in which Bickerstaff pronounces upon various honourable disputes.³⁰ As for Shaftesbury, the aim of *Tatler* was to promote politeness and good conversation, and the proceeds of the ‘Court of Honour’ were designed to ensure that this was encouraged.

The role of the court was also to expose the vices which the authors of *The Tatler* perceived to be rampant in their society. The rhetoric of unmasking is just as important to the authors of *The Tatler* as it was to figures such as La Rochefoucauld, and as it would be to Mandeville. ‘It has always been my Endeavour’, claims Bickerstaff (authored in this instance by Addison) ‘to distinguish between Realities and Appearances, and to separate true Merit from the Pretence of it’.³¹ But in this case, Addison wants to be able to discern true moral goodness – ‘the Virtues and Perfections of Mankind’ – from ‘those false

²⁸ *The Tatler*, no. 144, vol. 2, 319.

²⁹ *The Tatler*, no. 162 (22 April 1710), vol. 2, 404-5. [JA]

³⁰ For accounts of the various proceedings of the ‘Court of Honour’ see *The Tatler*, no. 253 (21 November 1710), vol. 3, 284-7; no. 256 (28 November 1710), vol. 3, 297-302; no. 259 (5 December 1710), vol. 3, 313-16; no. 262 (12 December 1710), vol. 3, 326-30; no. 265 (19 December 1710), vol. 3, 338-42.

³¹ *The Tatler*, no. 165 (29 April 1710), vol. 2, 414. [JA]

Colours and Resemblances of them, that shine alike in the Eyes of the Vulgar'.³² It is recognised that 'the Truth is, the Gross of Men are governed more by Appearances than Realities', and Steele even goes so far as to say that these 'Men of Front' should be allowed to 'press forward as they please in the Advancement of their Interests and Fortunes', as long as they do not harm others in so doing.³³

Significantly, Steele establishes early on that he has no intention of pretending to be disinterested in dispensing his moral advice, and has Bickerstaff claim that he has 'all along informed the Publick, that we intend to give them our Advices for our own Sakes, and are labouring to make our Lucubrations comes to some Price in Money'.³⁴ It seems to be important for Steele that his moral censorship is not tainted by the impression that he is associated with those 'Persons, who mount the Stage for the Cure or Information of the Crowd about them, to make solemn Professions of their being wholly disinterested in the Pains they take for the Publick Good'.³⁵ So, Steele wants to be able to benefit from his publications, but patently feels the need to assure his readers that he does not claim to do so disinterestedly: but his aim remains, primarily, to promote public virtue.

First and foremost, the authors of *The Tatler* are concerned to emphasise the need for greater 'Publick Spirit' among their readers.³⁶ In the final number, issued on 2 January 1711, Steele states that 'the general Purpose of' writing 'has been to recommend Truth, Innocence, Honour, and Virtue, as the chief Ornaments of Life'.³⁷ Like Shaftesbury, both Addison and Steele are critical of the practice they perceive in philosophy of 'making Vice commendable'.³⁸ The role of the public moralist or censor – those 'who make

³² *The Tatler*, no. 165, vol. 2, 414-15. [JA]

³³ *The Tatler*, no. 168 (6 May 1710), vol. 2, 428.

³⁴ *The Tatler*, no. 4 (19 April 1709), vol. 1, 36.

³⁵ *The Tatler*, no. 4, vol. 1, 36.

³⁶ See *The Tatler*, no. 1 (12 April 1709), vol. 1, 15.

³⁷ *The Tatler*, no. 271 (2 January 1711), vol. 3, 363.

³⁸ *The Tatler*, no. 191 (29 June 1710), vol. 3, 32-3. [JA and RS]

Philosophy the Entertainment of their Lives' – is to occupy themselves with 'practical Schemes for the Good of Society, and not pass away their time in fruitless Searches, which tend rather to the Ostentation of Knowledge and the Service of Life'.³⁹ The role of the philosopher is to work in the service of a public virtue in which all can engage.

Steele considers it important that Bickerstaff's moral advice is directed towards all people, and not just princes. Given the number of books written specifically for behaviour at royal courts, this seems eminently logical. 'While others are busy in Relations which concern the Interests of Princes, the Peace of Nations, and the Revolutions of Empire, I think ... my Theme of Discourse is sometimes to be of Matters of yet higher Consideration.'⁴⁰ Rather, Steele wants to emphasize those matters and events that 'are not accompanied with Show and Noise'.⁴¹ This picture of individuals who are quietly virtuous, while at the same time (it is implied) enjoying all the benefits of commercial society, is one that Mandeville was to heap much scorn upon.

IV

The Tatler was succeeded in March 1711 by *The Spectator*. The role envisaged for the character of the spectator was similar in a number of ways to the censorial Bickerstaff. The authorial voice is characterised in the first issue as being at once 'in the World', and at the same time largely removed from any specific context. This was to ensure that the spectator could observe accurately, without compromising his impartiality:

I live in the World, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species; by which means I have made myself a Speculative Statesman, Soldier, Merchant and Artizan, without ever meddling with any Practical Part in Life. I am very well versed in the Theory of a Husband, or a Father, and can discern the Errors in the Oeconomy, Business and Diversion of others, better than those who are engaged in them; as Standers-by discover Blots, which are apt to escape those who are in the Game. I never espoused any Party with Violence, and am resolved to observe

³⁹ *The Tatler*, no. 261 (9 December 1710), vol. 3, 322. [RS]

⁴⁰ *The Tatler*, no. 55 (16 August 1709), vol. 1, 384.

⁴¹ *The Tatler*, no. 55, vol. 1, 384.

an exact Neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare my self by the Hostilities of either side. In short, I have acted in all the Parts of my Life as a Looker-on, which is the Character I intend to preserve in this Paper.⁴²

As we can see, *The Spectator* was designed to provide as impartial an account of the actions of men as possible, and this was said to be even more necessary because of the increasing awareness that individuals were not always capable of judging these things for themselves.

They took the same position as had been taken by Bickerstaff in a late number of *The Tatler*, that only individuals hold the key to their own happiness.⁴³ This claim had two philosophical consequences. The first was that the achievement of happiness was something which could not rely on the approbation of others. On numerous occasions, the authors of *The Spectator* criticize the role that pride plays in the lives of their readers. Steele laments in March 1711 that ‘there is hardly that Person to be found, who is not more concerned for the Reputation of Wit and Sense, than Honesty and Virtue’.⁴⁴ He also emphasizes the fickle nature of the applause of the Multitude, which will ultimately fail to make people happy.⁴⁵ Addison puts it quite poetically a week later. ‘True Happiness is of a retired Nature’, he argues, ‘whereas false Happiness loves a Crowd’.⁴⁶

The other corollary is that, in order to appraise others’ lives and advise them on how to live, the authors of *The Spectator* realize that they have to achieve a high degree of objectivity, and this is part of their reason for remaining anonymous. Steele writes: ‘I have the high Satisfaction of beholding all Nature with an unprejudiced Eye; and having

⁴² *The Spectator*, no. 1 (1 March 1711), vol. 1, 4-5.

⁴³ *The Spectator*, no. 4 (5 March 1711), vol. 1, 18: ‘It is an endless and frivolous Pursuit to act by any other Ruler than the Care of satisfying our own Minds in what we do.’

⁴⁴ *The Spectator*, no. 6 (7 March 1711), vol. 1, 28.

⁴⁵ *The Spectator*, no. 188 (5 October 1711), vol. 2, 238.

⁴⁶ *The Spectator*, no. 15 (17 March 1711), vol. 1, 67-8.

nothing to do with Men's Passions and Interests, I can with greater Sagacity consider their Talents, Manners, Failings and Merits'.⁴⁷

Crucial to the authors of *The Spectator* was the assumption that everything has a 'real and intrinsick Value', and that this true value had to be understood and prioritized over mere appearance and apparent value (often clouded by human concerns).⁴⁸ In a dream vision, reported in August 1712, Addison recounts encountering 'a Pair of Golden Scales', which 'shewed the Value of every thing that is in Esteem among Men'.⁴⁹ It is important that he point out, he says, 'that these Weights did not exert their Natural Gravity, till they were laid in the Golden Ballance, insomuch that I could not guess which was light or heavy whilst I held them in my Hand'.⁵⁰ In other words, mere human conception is not enough in judging of moral concerns: although 'Eternity' feels light in his hands, Addison finds that he cannot 'stir' it even when he throws 'in that of Time, Prosperity, Affliction, Wealth, Poverty, Interest, Success, and many other Weights, which in my Hand seemed very ponderous' on to the other side of the scales.⁵¹ It was largely this notion that everything has a 'real and intrinsick Value', and that virtue will always objectively outweigh vice, that Mandeville seeks to question in his first prose works in English. It is therefore at this point that we turn to Mandeville's writings.

V

Mandeville was born into a successful medical family in Rotterdam in 1670. He was educated in Rotterdam, and then at the University in Leiden, where he took his medical degree in 1691. His studies were briefly interrupted by his involvement in the so-called Costerman riots of 1690, for which his father, Michael Mandeville, was expelled from

⁴⁷ *The Spectator*, no. 4, vol. 1, 19.

⁴⁸ *The Spectator*, no. 463 (21 August 1712), vol. 4, 137-8.

⁴⁹ *The Spectator*, no. 463, vol. 4, 135.

⁵⁰ *The Spectator*, no. 463, vol. 4, 136.

⁵¹ *The Spectator*, no. 463, vol. 4, 136.

Rotterdam.⁵² After taking his degree, Mandeville travelled throughout Europe, finally settling in England in 1693.

The remainder of the 1690s saw the appearance of a number of Latin medical treatises from Mandeville's pen, and in 1703-4 he began to publish satirical tracts in English.⁵³ But his first contribution of philosophical value and lasting influence came in 1705, with the publication of a poem entitled *The Grumbling Hive; or, Knaves turned Honest*. The poem depicts a hive of bees, which very much resembles a human community. It is described as 'a Spacious Hive well stocked with Bees', who are said to live 'in Luxury and Ease', and at the same time, are 'counted the great Nursery of Sciences and Industry'.⁵⁴ They live under a moderate, kingly government, in which monarchs 'could do no wrong, because their Power was circumscribed by Laws'.⁵⁵ It soon becomes clear, that the reason for the thriving of the hive has little to do with any virtue they may (or may not) have:

Vast Numbers thronged the fruitful Hive;
Yet those vast Numbers made them thrive;
Millions endeavouring to supply
Each other's Lust and Vanity;
Whilst Millions were employed,
To see their Handy-works destroyed.⁵⁶

The point is reiterated a number of times throughout the poem, that all 'Life's Conveniences' abundant in the hive, relied on the 'Vice' of some, which 'nursed [the] ingenuity' of others.⁵⁷

In 1714, *The Grumbling Hive* was reissued under a new title: *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vice, Public Benefits*. It was now published together with a selection of remarks designed to expand upon various couplets in the poem. They have the effect of making

⁵² For a discussion of the effect of the riots on Mandeville's intellectual development, see Dekker 1992, pp. 481-98.

⁵³ Mandeville 1703; Mandeville 1704a; Mandeville 1704b.

⁵⁴ [Mandeville] 1705, p. 1 [lines 1-2, 5-6].

⁵⁵ [Mandeville] 1705, p. 1 [lines 11-12].

⁵⁶ [Mandeville] 1705, p. 1 [lines 31-6].

⁵⁷ [Mandeville] 1705, p. 3 [line 197].

explicit the political message of the original poem, and are preceded by an essay entitled ‘An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue’. In 1723 yet another version appeared, this time containing two further essays: one dealing with the proliferation of charity schools, and the other attempting to understand the rise of society among men. It is generally agreed that it was the inclusion of the first of these, ‘Essay on Charity and Charity Schools’, that gave rise to so much public rancour, and which prompted the book’s presentation before the Grand Jury of Middlesex. Mandeville was no longer simply arguing that private ills led to national greatness, but he was now heaping scorn on those members of the nation who considered themselves upright and virtuous in their beneficent and charitable activities. E. G. Hundert has pointed out that the 1714 edition prompted some responses, but not many; Mandeville’s real fame comes with the 1723 edition and its extra layer of inflammatory rhetoric.⁵⁸

The remainder of the 1720s saw Mandeville turn his attention to other specific issues in which conventional social policy seemed to be failing. A proposal to legalize prostitution, published anonymously in 1724 was followed in 1725 by *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Frequent Executions at Tyburn*.⁵⁹ Finally, in 1728, Mandeville produced a second part to *The Fable*, in which he defended the conclusions of the original, as well as adding much philosophical reasoning to his rhetorical arguments, particularly focussing upon the role of pride in social life.⁶⁰ Although a semi-plausible argument might be made that the chief operation of pride is to follow some fundamental human interest, Mandeville rarely uses the vocabulary in the second part of *The Fable*, and this chapter will therefore focus on the earlier works.

⁵⁸ Hundert 1994, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁹ [Mandeville] 1724; Mandeville 1725a.

⁶⁰ Mandeville 1728.

I argued in my chapter on Hobbes, that we cannot find a consistent description of human nature in any of Hobbes's work, and in particular, we cannot predict whether people will act altruistically or selfishly in any given circumstance. I want to claim something similar in the case of Mandeville. He ends *The Fable of the Bees* with an essay entitled 'A Search into the Nature of Society'. Very importantly, the title stresses 'society' and not 'man', since he claims that 'the meaning of this is to discuss, whether there be a real Worth and Excellency in things, a preeminence of one above another, which every body will always agree to that well understands them'.⁶¹ He goes on to point out that while it is considered abhorrent in Christian countries, polygamy is entirely acceptable among Muslim nations.⁶² Moreover, Mandeville rejects the notion that goodness might be ascertained by following nature as closely as possible, since even 'in the Works of Nature, Worth and Excellency are uncertain'. Philosophers have been far too selective about the examples they provide from nature: 'How whimsical is the Florist in his Choice!'⁶³ Thus, Mandeville feels he can come to no other conclusion other than that 'the Hunting after this *Pulchrum & Honestum* is not much better than a Wild-Goose-Chace [sic]'.⁶⁴ As we shall see, this inability to distinguish between truly virtuous and truly vicious action was a crucial trope in the arguments of the French Port Royal writers who we encounter below.

In the second part of *The Fable*, first published in 1728, the character of Horatio insists that he is 'fully perswaded, that there is Good in the World as well as Evil; and that the Words, Honesty, Benevolence, and Humanity, and even Charity, are not empty

⁶¹ Mandeville 1723, p. 273.

⁶² Mandeville 1723, p. 379.

⁶³ Mandeville 1723, pp. 374-6.

⁶⁴ Mandeville 1723, p. 380.

Sounds only, but that there are such Things in spite of the Fable of the Bees'.⁶⁵ He claims that a reading of *The Fable* has 'bewitched' his interlocutor, Cleomenes.⁶⁶ Later in the same dialogue, Horatio again affirms the existence of virtue, arguing that 'I do not conclude from the Selfishness in some, that there is no Virtue in others' and that 'as bad as Mankind are, Virtue has an Existence as well as Vice, though it is more scarce'.⁶⁷ Cleomenes (often taken to be Mandeville's mouthpiece in the text) cannot necessarily be said to disagree. However, he does point out that the argument about selfishness and benevolence is useless in a practical sense. He agrees that 'it is to be wished for ... that Men had greater Regard to the Publick Welfare, less Fondness for their Private Interest, and more Charity for their Neighbours, than the Generality of them have'. However, men are not made more virtuous merely as a result of virtue's increased advocacy: 'Unless that can come to pass, it is the idlest Thing in the World to discourse upon, and demonstrate the Excellency of Virtue.'⁶⁸ People's desire to be esteemed will lead them into some actions that are potentially virtuous, and perhaps beneficial to others.

Indeed, following the controversy sparked by the 1723 edition of *The Fable*, Mandeville made a point of insisting that he was not denying the possibility of virtue. In 'A Vindication of the Book' appended to the fourth edition of *The Fable* in 1725, Mandeville describes the preceding discourse as 'a Book of severe and exalted Morality, that contains a strict Test of Virtue'. Rather than denying that such morality existed, the aim is in fact to provide 'an infallible Touchstone to distinguish the real from the counterfeited'.⁶⁹

It could be argued that these defences were all designed by Mandeville to act as insulation against the claims of his detractors, that he was advocating immoral behaviour.

⁶⁵ Mandeville 1728, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁶ Mandeville 1728, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ Mandeville 1728, pp. 27-8.

⁶⁸ Mandeville 1728, pp. 28-30.

⁶⁹ Mandeville 1725b, pp. 467-8.

At one point in *The Fable*, Mandeville claims that his critics are only annoyed by the fact that he refuses to flatter them in the same way that other writers have: ‘what hurt do I do to Man if I make him more known to himself than he was before?’ he asks, stating that although he has ‘shewn the way to worldly Greatness’, he has ‘always without hesitation preferred the Road that leads to Virtue’.⁷⁰ Thus, as John Colman points out, we might conclude that, rather than arguing that humanity is wholly lacking in real virtue, Mandeville simply wants to say that such virtue is a rarity, and exists only in a few individuals.⁷¹

A number of scholars take Mandeville seriously when he claims that ‘his book was not a plea for vice’.⁷² One argues that ‘Mandeville posed a choice between two sorts of world, and choosing between them was to choose between moral principles’.⁷³ This ‘choice’ allows for an act of charity to be conceived of as ‘a genuine sacrifice ... with no hope of worldly or other-worldly rewards’.⁷⁴ A corollary of this is that real virtue can be the downfall of society as we know it, if too many people attempt to maintain it at the expense of worldly and material gain, since national economies rely on such selfish behaviour to flourish.

Other commentators reject the notion that Mandeville holds that men are capable of engaging in any behaviour other than vice. Hundert argues that ‘according to Mandeville, all civilised nations owed their very foundations not to morally empowered acts of virtuous legislators of the sort populating European national myths, but to the ability of strong, cunning minorities to tame and discipline the fractious passions of savage multitudes’.⁷⁵ This is surely correct. However, it does not necessarily follow that ‘persons would always and only seek to act in ways they believed would best serve their individual

⁷⁰ Mandeville 1723, pp. 258.

⁷¹ Colman 1972, pp. 125-39.

⁷² Scott-Taggart 1966, pp. 221-2.

⁷³ Scott-Taggart 1966, p. 228.

⁷⁴ Scott-Taggart 1966, p. 231.

⁷⁵ Hundert 1994, p. 19.

interests'.⁷⁶ This was certainly true of men who existed outside of civil society, but the very *point* of living in society was to sacrifice some of one's interests in order to appease other passions, primarily that of pride.

We can see that the extent to which Mandeville believes virtuous action to be truly possible is hotly contested, and no one view predominates among historians of ideas. What I can say for certain, however, is that Mandeville never uses the vocabulary of interests in points for or against this view.

VII

Before the first issue of *The Female Tatler* appeared in November 1709, Mandeville published a collection of dialogues entitled *The Virgin Unmasked*. The two principal characters are Antonia, the young and innocent girl and her aunt Lucinda. It is established in the very first dialogue that Antonia's youthful innocence – her faith in genuine honour and virtue, and her determination to find a husband who represents such qualities – are going to be undone by her world-weary aunt.

Mandeville warns us against assuming that the extreme cynicism expressed by Lucinda is necessarily his own opinion. In the preface he admits that his 'Design ... is to let young Ladies know whatever is dreadful in Marriage; and this could not be done, but by introducing one that was an Enemy to it'.⁷⁷ But, he says, though *Lucinda* speaks altogether against Matrimony, don't think that I do so too'.⁷⁸ In other words, we are not to take the extremity of Lucinda's tone to be indicative of Mandeville's own views (however, this may simply be a way of insulating himself as author).

⁷⁶ Hundert 1994, p. 20.

⁷⁷ Mandeville 1709, sig. A, 7r.

⁷⁸ Mandeville 1709, sig. A, 7r.

The most significant reference to ‘interests’ in *The Virgin Unmasked* comes in a rather incongruous discussion of the character of Louis XIV.⁷⁹ He is described as an ‘Ambitious Monarch, that has nothing of Religion, but what his Politicks direct’ and ‘Laughs at Oaths, and Solemn Promises, and knows nothing Binding, but his Interest’.⁸⁰ We soon discover that this discussion of international politics is in fact designed as a metaphor for the positions of men and women.⁸¹

The metaphor is revived in the eighth dialogue, in which the characters turn their attention to ‘civil Gentlemen’, whom Lucinda wants to warn her niece against.⁸² She argues that ‘there is nothing more dangerous, than to trust young Women with what you call civil Gentlemen’, and even goes on to suggest that more obviously boisterous men are safer because they cause women to be on their guard sooner.⁸³ From this point, they move onto a discussion of the plight of French Huguenots under Louis’s rule. Lucinda feels herself called upon to say whether ‘the Usage which they [the Huguenots] had from him [Louis] was not tyrannical’, to which she answers that it was, of course, tyrannical.⁸⁴ However, she also addresses the question of whether such actions were in the king’s interest, and indeed in the interest of his country, to which the answer is also affirmative.⁸⁵ Mandeville is clearly attempting to divorce the pursuit of interest from moral action.

If we take into account only Mandeville’s *uses* of the vocabulary of interest or interests in *The Female Tatler*, we see that the concept has no necessary relation to vice. So, he satirises what he takes to be ‘the Ingenious Mr *Bickerstaff*’s Opinion, that none are to be

⁷⁹ Here I intend to build on the germ of analysis found in Goldsmith 2001, pp. 81-2.

⁸⁰ Mandeville 1709, pp. 126-7.

⁸¹ There is, of course, the possibility that this metaphor is merely a cover under which Mandeville can make two women discuss politics. After all, he does say in the preface that he will expect to be ‘Censured for letting Women talk of Politicks’ (Mandeville 1709, sig. A, 7r).

⁸² Mandeville 1709, pp. 155-6.

⁸³ Mandeville 1709, pp. 156-7.

⁸⁴ Mandeville 1709, p. 158.

⁸⁵ Mandeville 1709, pp. 158-9.

counted Alive, but such as, setting aside all private Interest and Personal Pleasure, are Generous enough to labour and exert themselves for the benefit of others'.⁸⁶ This is the argument made by the character of Lucinda in *The Female Tatler*. But Mandeville also points to exactly the argument we found in the Anglican moralists in the previous chapter, that acting virtuously is in our interests. In the same issue of *The Female Tatler*, Mandeville has the Oxford gentleman argue that 'the certainty of a future State, makes it the Interest of every individual Person to be Virtuous'.⁸⁷ In this case, interest is clearly connected most intimately with virtue. However, the Oxford gentleman goes on to assert that this version of private interest is incompatible with modern commercial life, since

Humility, Temperance, Contentedness, Frugality, and several other Virtues, are very insignificant, as to the Publick, and so far from making a Country Flourish, that no Nation yet enjoyed the most ordinary Comforts of Life, if they were not Counter-ballanced by the opposite Vices.⁸⁸

Having begun with a quotation from Seneca to the effect that society, like a stone arch (*fornicationi lapidum* – Mandeville characteristically plays on the similarity between the Latin *fornicatio* (fornication) and *fornix* (arch)) only remains standing while all the individual stones support each other, we end with the realisation that those things which individuals do to support each other need not originate in any form of public-spiritedness. Thus he embraces the paradox that 'nothing is more beneficial to the Publick, than the Prodigal, or more immediately detrimental than the Miser'.⁸⁹

At this stage, it seems that either Mandeville, or at least the Oxford gentleman, is prepared to accept that the smooth running of society relies upon a balance of what are commonly conceived as vices and virtues, both of which could be conceived in terms of interests. Here we find Mandeville beginning the process of the *demoralization* of interests,

⁸⁶ *Female Tatler*, number 62 (25-8 November 1709) in Mandeville 1999, p. 98.

⁸⁷ *Female Tatler*, number 62, p. 99.

⁸⁸ *Female Tatler*, number 62, pp. 99-100.

⁸⁹ *Female Tatler*, number 62, p. 100.

which was to be completed in *The Fable of the Bees*, but perhaps just as effectively in his earlier work: *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness*.

VIII

Although *The Fable of the Bees* is by far Mandeville's most famous work, perhaps of even greater significance for our purposes is *Free Thoughts*, published in 1720. It is in this work that we find most of Mandeville's references to interest. In the first chapter, which takes us straight to the heart of the matter in defining religion itself, Mandeville sets up the most abiding theme of his philosophy. 'My aim', he informs his readers, 'is to make Men penetrate their own Consciences, and by searching without Flattery into the true Motives of their Actions, learn to know themselves'. His first move is to question the motives of the 'single Man' who, 'in the prime of his Youth and Strength, when Lust is most raging, wholly abstains from Fornication'. Against those who would argue that this comes from a 'Religious Concern', Mandeville argues that such abstinence proceeds from a desire to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and damage to his reputation. Such prudence, he points out, 'is not conquering the Passions, but bartering one for another ... for what he loses in the Pleasures, he might receive from Lust is repaid him in Pride, worldly Interest, and the Insurance of his Health'.⁹⁰ Thus, rather than sacrificing interest for morality, or realizing that morality and interest are the same, Mandeville argues that men most often sacrifice moral virtue for the opportunity to serve their interests.

Mandeville goes on to claim that 'the worldly Interest of the whole Society often interferes with the eternal Welfare of every particular Member of it' (p. 12). This is true, for Mandeville in two senses. Firstly, it is indicative of his *demoralization* of interests: his denial that interests are consistent with moral virtue. But, more importantly at this stage,

⁹⁰ Mandeville 1720, p. 11. Because I shall quote from Mandeville 1720 consecutively in this section, I have dispensed with footnotes, and simply include the page numbers in brackets in the main text.

it is a comment about freedom of religion, since he clearly means to refer to the way in which particular and transient interests have come to define the different ways in which different individuals and groups in society have come to worship God.

Mandeville insists that all acts of religious worship must be acknowledged 'to be of Human Invention' and we should see that we have 'none that we could with any certainty call Apostolical' (pp. 52-3). He does this in order to stress the pointlessness of persecuting those who want to find new and different ways in which to worship God. Comparing the rift between the high Anglicans and the Presbyterians to a fleshy wound, Mandeville argues that 'those who are intrusted with the Cure' (i.e. the ideologues themselves) have to 'throw by their Controversies, and ... cease to keep open the Wounds with so much industry and application' (p. 57). In order to achieve this, he calls on Dissenters 'to distinguish between things indifferent, and those that are clashing with the Gospel' until they realize 'that many Things of humane Invention may have their Politick use, and be beneficial to Society, without interfering with Religion' (pp. 59-60). To the 'rigid Churchman', he is perhaps more cutting, pointing out that if he were to compare his actual 'Stock of inward Virtue' with the 'vast Concern he shews to the Sinfulness of Schism in others', he would 'enter into the real Cause of his Uneasiness ... and no longer mistake Self-interest for Charity, and Party Zeal for Religion' (pp. 60-1). We can see that, three years before the publication of the second edition of *The Fable*, Mandeville is developing his thoughts about charity and its relation to interest.

The main source of religious conflict is said to emanate not from theology or the worship of God *per se*, but only as it is manifested in churches and priests. 'Those who are the most solicitous about the Temporal Interest of the Church', Mandeville argues, 'are commonly the greatest Persecutors' (p. 215). He claims to have proved 'that inward Religion and spiritual Devotion, were not what the Multitude was ever much affected with' and that 'they must have something more gross that employs their Senses' (pp. 119-

20). The original institution of churches and organised religious worship is said to be caused by the operations of worldly interest:

Those who are but in the least acquainted with the History of the third, fourth and fifth Centuries, cannot be ignorant how often the Christian and Heathen Priests drove out one another by turns, according as the Religion of the one or the other prevailed, sometimes with cruel Persecution, and sometimes with tolerable Moderation, according to the Temper of the Emperor or his Favourites, and must know that the Christian Clergy were as Intriguing as other Priests, nor less industrious to promote their Temporal Interest, and that as soon as it was in their Power, they encouraged the building of Churches, some of them not inferiour to the most magnificent Pagan Temples, of which at last they kept for their own use, out of Prudence, those that had not been demolished out of zeal. (p. 121)

The Christian clergy purport to despise ‘all worldly Interest’ and lay ‘down their Lives for the Welfare of others’, ‘Preaching up Meekness, Patience, Obedience to the Civil Magistrate, and an intire Resignation to the Will of GOD’ (pp. 124-5). Mandeville argues that ‘the Business of the Clergy is to teach us our several Duties toward GOD and Man’, and that ‘whenever they talk to us of other matters by way of Instruction, they exceed their Commission’ (p. 245). Furthermore, being the head of the church is said to bear little relation to ‘the Essentials of Christianity’, and Mandeville argues that a figure such as Pope Innocent XI ‘had no Piety that made him neglectful of his Interest’ (pp. 167-8). But in fact it has become clear that ‘the Church of Christ, as it signifies the extent of Jurisdiction, the Temporal Interest and Authority of the Clergy that profess Christianity, has been propagated by quite contrary means’ (p. 125). It is this that has led to the persecution that Mandeville finds in his society.

Even the ‘best’ of the church have avoided ‘her Indignation and Resentment, when they either opposed that Interest, or found the least Fault with the Clergy’ (pp. 160-1). Conversely, ‘if he will promote her Temporal Interest, [he] shall always command her good Word’ (pp. 153-4). The clergy, ‘thoroughly understanding their own Interest’ thereby encouraged the ‘profound Ignorance’ which is generally attributed to the barbarian incursions into the Roman Empire in the early medieval period, and prevented

the spread of 'the good Sense' of the ancient pagan philosophers (pp. 150-1). Thus, in times of schism (and particularly since the Reformation) secular leaders have been carried along (in part, persuaded by the clergy) due to the temporal advantages that accrue from such religious divides (pp. 186-8). So, the clergy have a vested interest in maintaining the gap between religious sects: 'It is not their Interest we should meet each other half way, more than it would be the Interest of a Ferryman to have the two Shores unite' (pp. 212-13). Once again, it could not be clearer that interests and morality do not align.

Mandeville wants to stress that, in much of what they do in this respect, the clergy are not entirely blameable. He points out that 'all Men are taught to display themselves to the best Advantage' and that 'this is called humane Prudence' (pp. 255-6). And he notices that 'all the heroic Flights of Love and Friendship, publick Spiritedness to ones [sic] Ruin, and the Contempt of Death to any Extreme, are looked upon as Romantick Notions only fit for Knight-Errantry, and are laughed out of Countenance by the wiser sort of People' (pp. 255-6). Furthermore, we have to recognise that, despite the esteem in which they are held by the public, they are a body of professional men who want to maximise their rewards (pp. 259-60). That 'every Body makes the most of his Business for himself', is simply presented as a fact, one consequence of which is 'that those of the same Profession often combine together and form themselves into Companies and Societies, to consult and promote the general Interest of their Profession' (pp. 260-2).

This is not to say that the crimes and hypocrisy of clergymen (particularly given their inordinate degree of moral authority) should not go unpunished by their civil rulers. 'Nothing is more destructive to the Peace of Society', Mandeville argues, 'than to let the Clamours and Audaciousness of Malecontent Clergy-men go unpunished when they become Criminal' (pp. 285-6). Mandeville thus appears to be a strong critic of the role religion in government. He asserts that 'the Civil Magistrates ought never to part with their Fasces to any Function or Profession whatever, but keep in their own Hands the

sole Power of punishing Offences, be the Crime what it will' (p. 282). At the same time, he recognises that this is made much harder in the case of the clergy, when we consider in how high esteem the majority of people unthinkingly holds the profession. His attempt at a solution to this problem is continuous with his general project of unmasking and revealing the true nature of people's actions. Therefore 'nothing is more false', he claims, 'than that to bring a Clergy-man to Shame is an Affront to his Cloth' (p. 294). That priests are as much moved to action by their material interests as much as anyone else, should be of no surprise. But neither should the idea that abuses of their moral authority must be punished be held to be disrespectful or sacrilegious.

Finally, it is in *Free Thoughts* that Mandeville provides a large proportion of his reflection on government. He points out that, although all men agree on the necessity of some form of government, very few agree on which form is best (p. 296). The picture of the ideal constitution as presented by Mandeville, is of a strong monarchy limited by law: 'The chief end, why the King is invested with ... Power is to enable him to maintain the Laws, and since the King has no Prerogative but what is ratified by Law, it is impossible, he should make, repeal, or alter any, and nothing is more absurd than to advance, that a Person has a just Authority to destroy what he has Sworn to keep'. (p. 302). He goes on to say that the king's prerogative can only be enlarged by the agreement of the people, who, in doing so, would be 'laying aside for a while the great Buckler of their Liberty, the *Habeas Corpus* Act'. He stresses that this would only be done with Parliament's confidence in the 'good intention of the King and Ministry' (p. 303).

It soon becomes clear that Mandeville's conception of politics relies heavily on custom, tradition, and gradual change. He argues that absolute monarchs are only entitled to justify such power in the absence of the kind of surrendering and granting of privileges as has historically been experienced in countries such as Britain (pp. 307-8). He laments that the notion of divinely ordained government is rarely used other than to

justify unlimited, absolute monarchy to the 'Exclusion of all other Forms of Government' (pp. 309-10). Mandeville stresses that 'GOD commands us to be obedient to the higher Powers', and that this means all kinds of higher powers (pp. 309-10).

As has been the case for religion, men's best policy in relation to politics is to apply free and clear thinking, and thereby remove 'all Clogs of prejudice, and fetters of humane Authority' (p. 335). Mandeville criticises those who expect too much public virtue from public ministers. He argues that 'the Envy, Strife and all the Feuds of Courts are so many Safeguards to the Liberty of the People, they never fail producing sever Censures to those that the Helm' (pp. 341-2). However, the machinations of courts also come shrouded in mystery. Mandeville comments that understanding 'the Juggle of Courts' is, to the uninitiated, 'what a Game of Chess is to a Man wholly ignorant of it' (p. 341). Thus, either we remain deluded, or we accept that the price of our liberty is a certain degree of hypocrisy. 'To expect Ministries without Faults, and Courts without Vices', Mandeville states, 'is grossly betraying our ignorance of human Affairs' (pp. 355-6). In politics, as in religion, the key to our happiness is to lower our expectations of those in authority, and we are only hampered in achieving this happiness by our over-high expectations.

In the *Free Thoughts*, Mandeville argues that, in order to improve our religious and political situation, we have to understand the extent to which interests underlie the exteriority of virtue, and he attempts an explanation of why we are so often ignorant of people's true motives and interests. In a manner evocative of Hobbes, he defines the will as 'the last Result of deliberation, either long or short, which immediately precedes the execution of, or at least the endeavour to execute the Thing Willed' (p. 88). The problem for human beings, when it comes to judgements about charity and interest, is the 'swiftness of Thought', which accounts for the fact that 'the true Motives of our Will so often pass by undiscovered' (p. 90). The swiftness of thought is the main culprit, and

Mandeville stresses that ‘when we act slowly, and what is called deliberately, the Motives of very Volition must be obvious to all that have the Courage, as well as Capacity, to search for them’ (p. 90). Therefore, having the ‘Courage’ and patience to understand the interested motives of others will aid us in determining our own best actions.

We can see the clear influence of the French Moralists in Mandeville’s writing, insofar as he seeks to unmask the actions of clergymen and politicians. But, in the final pages of the *Free Thoughts*, Mandeville provides an outline ‘to promote real Goodness’, which involves the suppression of ‘Vice and Immorality’ (pp. 360-1). It was in *The Fable of the Bees*, and its theory of private vices being turned into public benefits, that Mandeville might be said to contradict entirely this call for the suppression of vice.

IX

In addressing *The Fable*, we should begin with Mandeville’s argument that the greatness of national economies relies on vice, since it is from this argument that we can derive his unique perspective on the common good. Consider “Remark (G)”, in which Mandeville expands on the following lines:

The worst of all the Multitude
Did something for the Common Good.⁹¹

Although he begins by stressing that ‘Thieves and House-breakers’ are ‘very pernicious to Human Society’, Mandeville’s real point is that ‘if all People were strictly honest, and no body would meddle with or pry into any thing but his own, half the Smiths of the Nation would want Employment’.⁹² It also for this reason that Mandeville argues that while it is ‘Prudence’ to ‘relieve their [the workers’] Wants’, it would be ‘Folly to cure them’.⁹³ This theme is taken up very strongly in “An Essay on Charity, and Charity-

⁹¹ Mandeville 1723, pp. 9, 82. Cf. [Mandeville] 1705, p. 2.

⁹² Mandeville 1723, p. 82.

⁹³ Mandeville 1723, pp. 280-1.

Schools” which comes after the Remarks. There will always be a large number of people trapped in drudgery, Mandeville argues, and economic expansion has come to rely upon them existing in such a condition, such that ‘no great Nation can be happy without vast Numbers of them’. He concludes therefore that ‘a wise Legislature’ should ‘cultivate the Breed of them with all imaginable Care, and provide against their Scarcity’ (their abundance being threatened by the idea of charity schools designed to lift their economic status through the teaching of morals).⁹⁴

The legislator is needed to cultivate men’s passions in order to militate against their weakness. Rulers therefore require a deep awareness and comprehension of their subjects’ ‘Passions and Appetites, the Strength and Weakness of their Frame, and understand how to turn their greatest Frailties to the Advantage of the Publick’, in order that they can achieve their principle aim: to ‘civilise Men, and establish them in a Body Politick’.⁹⁵ As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Mandeville recognises – just as much as the theorists of the commonwealth – that some mechanism is required to create an identity between people’s private interests and the common good. However, for Mandeville, this is constituted largely by deploying an internal principle – the appeal to the advantages associated with honour and pride – rather than any constitution or institutional solution.

Mandeville presents honour (as it is traditionally conceived) not merely as impractical, but as useless in the modern world. He claims that he often likens ‘the Virtues of great Men to ... large *China* Jars’: since people invest them with such ‘Value’, we ‘think they might be very useful, but look into a thousand of them, and you will find nothing ... but Dust and Cobwebs’.⁹⁶ The traditional ‘Man of Honour’ is defined as someone prepared to suffer for the sake of others. Mandeville expresses this in terms of interests, since an

⁹⁴ Mandeville 1723, p. 327.

⁹⁵ Mandeville 1723, p. 230.

⁹⁶ Mandeville 1723, p. 181.

honourable man 'is obliged always to be faithful to his 'Trust, to prefer the publick Interest to his own'.⁹⁷ The only problem is that modern society has no place for 'the Men of ancient Honour', and Don Quixote is described as the last of such men.⁹⁸

The modern man of honour is characterised very differently. Modern honour is not to be confused with virtue, Mandeville insists, since 'all the Recompense a Man has of a Virtuous Action, is the Pleasure of doing it, which most People reckon but poor Pay', whereas 'the Self-denial a Man of Honour Submits to in one Appetite, is immediately rewarded by the Satisfaction he receives from another, and what he abates of his Avarice, or any other Passion is doubly repaid to his Pride'.⁹⁹ It is suggested here, as it had been by the French moralists, that there is absolutely no external difference between moral virtuous and interested action, though they are never the same thing.

The theme of honour is taken up in Mandeville's social commentary. In *A Modest Defence of Public Stews*, published anonymously in 1724, Mandeville argues for the legalization of prostitution.¹⁰⁰ He argues that women have a strong sexual desire, which society seeks to 'counterballance' by providing them with 'strong Notions of Honour carefully inculcated into them from their Infancy'.¹⁰¹ This is achieved by teaching girls to 'hate a *Whore*, before they know what the Word means', and thereby making it a woman's 'Interest' to depend upon their reputation for chastity: 'This Sense of Honour and Interest, is what we may call artificial Chastity; and it is upon this Compound of natural and artificial Chastity, that every Woman's real actual Chastity depends.'¹⁰² Such a lesson works very well for those who are perhaps 'less Amorous than others' – whom Mandeville describes as 'almost impregnable' – but for those women who, despite having 'the same Value for their Reputation', 'are naturally of a very sanguine amorous

⁹⁷ Mandeville 1723, pp. 217-18.

⁹⁸ Mandeville 1723, p. 218.

⁹⁹ Mandeville 1723, p. 246-7.

¹⁰⁰ [Mandeville] 1724.

¹⁰¹ [Mandeville] 1724, p. 42.

¹⁰² [Mandeville] 1724, p. 42.

Disposition', even 'Honour and Interest' can be 'lulled to sleep'.¹⁰³ The taking away of a woman's chastity is described in terms of an armed invasion, in which 'Honour and Interest require a long Chain of solid Reasoning before they can be set in Battel-Array; whereas Inclination [by which Mandeville must mean passion] is presently under Arms, the moment Love has pitched his *Standard*'.¹⁰⁴

But there is yet another type of woman, for whom the calculation of interest is perhaps even more important. Mandeville argues that not all women have an interest in chastity. Indeed, some 'put slighter Value than ordinary upon their Characters' and are therefore (or thereby) 'generally, in their Circumstances, either above the World or below it'.¹⁰⁵ It is only 'the middle Rank of Womankind' that have their 'Interest and Fortune' depending upon a reputation of chastity.¹⁰⁶ Honour is said to have no power to give women a reason to remain honourable, unless it is coupled with interest.¹⁰⁷

But, it is important to stress that this is not to say that, because honour and interest are the same, that virtue and interest are the same. Rather, it is an attempt to show that simply being outwardly honourable does not make us morally virtuous on the inside. Most often, it shows that we are driven by motives far from virtuous, and in *The Fable*, this comes to be applied to economic principles such as frugality. For Mandeville, frugality is not compatible with an expansionist society. If you want 'a frugal and honest society', he argues, 'the best Policy is to preserve Men in their Native Simplicity', 'not to increase their Numbers' and to 'keep them from everything that might raise their Desires or improve their Understanding'.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Mandeville is scornful of those who point to the frugality of the Dutch as an example of a virtuous people living in the ideal society.

¹⁰³ [Mandeville] 1724, pp. 42-3.

¹⁰⁴ [Mandeville] 1724, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ [Mandeville] 1724, p. 45.

¹⁰⁶ [Mandeville] 1724, p. 45.

¹⁰⁷ [Mandeville] 1724, pp. 45-6.

¹⁰⁸ Mandeville 1723, p. 201.

The Dutch do not live frugally because they are virtuous. Rather, they do so because it is in their 'Interest': 'it is their Interest to be frugal and spend little: because they must have everything from Abroad, except Butter, Cheese and Fish.' By contrast, the British live in a large state, relying upon the revenue brought in by exports, and the manufacture and sale of luxuries with the island; the practice of frugality would cripple the British economy. Mandeville reiterates just a few pages later that 'the *Dutch* generally endeavour to promote as much Frugality among their Subjects as it is possible, not because it is Virtue, but because it is, generally speaking, their Interest' and 'as this latter [their interest] changes, so they alter their Maxims'.¹⁰⁹ Such pragmatism – the alteration of maxims based upon changing interests – had been criticized in the seventeenth century.¹¹⁰

Mandeville ends the Remarks on frugality with a comparison. He argues that the Tsar of Muscovy is absolutely right to be educating his peasants to a certain level, but he stresses that this does not make the same policy right in Britain, since '*Russia* has too few Knowing Men, and *Great Britain* too many'.¹¹¹ Thus, the politicians have to adapt policy to suit the particular character of their people. This comes with a very strong sense that there is no intrinsically good policy; it will not be in our worldly interests to be virtuous if being virtuous involves *always* being frugal, or well educated, or anything absolute.

Not only does Mandeville dispel the myth that frugal practices are reflective of superior virtue, but he warns the state against trusting in virtue at all: 'a whole Nation ought never to trust to any Honesty', he argues, 'but what is built upon Necessity'. It is more prudent to rely upon vice, because 'unhappy is the People ... whose Welfare must

¹⁰⁹ Mandeville 1723, p. 208. See also Mandeville 1709, p. 165: 'The *Dutch*, perhaps, have more Money than we, but they have no Land, nor Plenty in Comparison to us; and if they were less industrious and saving, they could not make such a figure in the World, as they do.'

¹¹⁰ E.g. [Stubbe] 1672, p. 4: 'An Hollander! This is the *Name* of a *People* that esteem nothing *sacred*, but their *own profit*, and live under *no obligations* of *Honour*, *Morality*, or *Religion*, but *Interest*.'

¹¹¹ Mandeville 1723, pp. 369-70.

depend upon the Virtues and Consciences of Ministers and Politicians'.¹¹² Thus, we cannot rely upon the virtue of politicians, and this proves that Mandeville is not a republican of the stripe we have encountered in the rest of this thesis. However, I still want to argue that Mandeville shares with republicans the notion that interests have to be somehow manipulated to serve the common good: they do not do so naturally.

In the introductory 'Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue', Mandeville makes it clear that men naturally follow their interests, and that it requires an ingenious legislator or politician to persuade men not to follow their baser interests:

the Chief thing ... which Lawgivers and other Wise Men, that have laboured for the Establishment of Society, have endeavoured, has been to make the People they were to govern, believe, that it was more beneficial for every body to conquer than indulge his Appetites, and much better to mind the Publick than what seemed his private Interest.¹¹³

Thus, morality as we know it (and as peddled by 'sagacious Moralists') was an invention of politicians as a way by which to persuade men to get along with each other. Such thinkers and writers 'draw Men like Angels, in hopes that the Pride at least in some will put them upon copying after the beautiful Originals which they are represented to be'.¹¹⁴ Moral action comes as a result of men's desire to be esteemed by their peers, and moral writers have been clever enough to make use of this fact. Hence, Mandeville's succinct maxim that 'Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride'.¹¹⁵

Though of course Mandeville also emphasises that pride is one of the passions 'we chiefly ought to hide', since to be seen as proud diminishes the esteem we receive in the eyes of others.¹¹⁶ So, 'the Man of Sense and Education never exalts more in his Pride than when he hides it with the greatest dexterity'.¹¹⁷ Thus man, for Mandeville, is made of

¹¹² Mandeville 1723, pp. 207-8.

¹¹³ Mandeville 1723, p. 28.

¹¹⁴ Mandeville 1723, p. 38.

¹¹⁵ Mandeville 1723, p. 37.

¹¹⁶ Mandeville 1723, pp. 58-9.

¹¹⁷ Mandeville 1723, p. 73.

‘strange Contradictions’, since ‘the Reverse of Shame is Pride, yet no Body can be touched with the first, that never felt any thing of the latter’.¹¹⁸

In a move very similar to Hobbes, Mandeville emphasises the inconvenience of men living in a savage state, in which they are ‘being continually crossed by others of the same Stamp’ and so very quickly come to desire society.¹¹⁹ In this sense they come to recognise that it is ‘the Interest ... of the very worst of them, more than any, to preach up Publick-spiritedness, that they might reap the Fruits of the Labour and Self-denial of others’.¹²⁰ This whole process relied upon an initial separation (instigated by the more prudent humans) of the population into an underclass ‘who differed from Brutes in nothing but their outward Figure’, and an elite who were ‘called the true Representatives of their sublime Species, exceeding in worth the first Class by more degrees, than that it self was superior to the Beasts of the Field’.¹²¹ Hence the rise of the moral philosopher.

Mandeville argues that ‘the Generality of Moralists and Philosophers have hitherto agreed that there could be no Virtue without Self-denial, but a late Author, who is now much Read by Men of Sense, is of a contrary Opinion, and imagines that Men without any trouble or violence in themselves may be Naturally Virtuous.’ He goes on to admit that Shaftesbury’s ‘Notions’ are ‘generous and refined’, that ‘they are a High Compliment to Human-Kind, and capable by the help of a little Enthusiasm of Inspiring us with the most Noble Sentiments concerning the Dignity of our exalted Nature’, while lamenting the fact that it simply is not true.¹²² Thus, Mandeville pits himself not against all theories of virtue but, primarily, against the notion that we can serve our own interests, and perhaps even those of the community, while at the same time remaining virtuous. Virtue

¹¹⁸ Mandeville 1723, p. 56.

¹¹⁹ Mandeville 1723, pp. 33-4.

¹²⁰ Mandeville 1723, p. 34.

¹²¹ Mandeville 1723, pp. 30-1.

¹²² Mandeville 1723, pp. 371-2.

can only be a rejection and disavowal of interests, which most people are not prepared to accept.

X

Whereas seventeenth-century clergymen had made the strong and radical assertion that serving our interest is our moral duty, Mandeville claims that no amount of philosophizing (and he ascribes this move primarily to Shaftesbury) can change the fact that only our most disinterested acts are truly virtuous. At the same time, however, Mandeville is part of a long tradition that is entirely comfortable to say that interests are the principal factors by which to order human (rather than divine) society. My final chapter will deal with a number of responses to Mandeville's claims, and the main focus will be on Joseph Butler. Although we shall see that Butler is most concerned to echo Tillotson's assertion that what is in our interest is also our moral duty, he also wants to use this to neutralise Mandeville's conviction that virtue and the pursuit of interest are entirely unrelated, which is perceived as dangerous, since everyone seems to agree that interests are the strongest rulers of men's actions. Furthermore, we shall find that Butler (going much further than his latitudinarian forebears) wishes to promote the notion that by acting according to our interests, and in an entirely moral fashion, individuals also serve the common good. In so doing, he is also attempting to neutralize Mandeville's false dichotomy between morality and political economy.

Joseph Butler: private interests, virtue and the common good

I

The latitudinarians claimed that in performing our duty we are also serving our interests. Although this conclusion relied on a narrower conception of what is in our interest, it might be argued that it paves the way for the claim that in pursuing our interests (and thereby acting virtuously) we will automatically serve the common good. This is an attractive notion, if we conceive of virtuous action as somehow aiming towards the good or interest of the whole. Republicans clearly see this to be the case, and therefore it might be justifiable to say that – as we saw in chapters 3 and 5 – private interests, when dictated and led (or manipulated) by virtue, are directly beneficial to the public good. However, this way of thinking is still troubling to many Christian political philosophers, since it relies upon a conception of virtue that is human and not necessarily divine.

I begin this chapter with an analysis of those thinkers who seek to reject Mandeville's treatment of God and religion, but essentially agree with his use of the idea of interest: that interest cannot be identified with virtue. Both George Berkeley and his forerunner, Nicolas Malebranche, dismiss the notion that interest can be consonant both with our virtuous actions, and with the common good. I then move on to a discussion of a number of different responses to Mandeville that appeared in the 1720s, and which stressed man's natural inclination towards sociability and benevolence. As we shall see, some of these writers even suggested that some of our particular interests might serve the common good. However, none of these writers are able to bring themselves to find a perfect and natural harmony between private interest, virtue and the common good. At least, none of them expressed such a sentiment in this particular language.¹

¹ The authors whom I comment upon here might seem to be limited to the canon of moral philosophers in the early eighteenth century. This is not the intention. Rather, I have chosen those writers who both sought

This was true of almost all theorists, except Joseph Butler, who argues that particular interests are in fact naturally identical with both our moral obligations and the common good. The final section of this chapter will deal with his various writings and how this argument was made and evolved. Butler is considered to be difficult to contextualise due to the abstractness of his thinking. But I seek to show that by putting him in the intellectual context of the use of the vocabulary of interests by his contemporaries, we *can* see him to be doing something of significance within his particular historical and intellectual circumstances, rather than only as a floating subject of modern textbooks of moral philosophy.²

II

The moral philosopher and high churchman, George Berkeley, composed sections of his dialogue, *Alciphron: or, the Minute Philosopher* (1732), as a refutation of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. In his dialogue between the free-thinker Alciphron and his more virtuous interlocutors, Euphrator and Crito, Berkeley reverts to an outright condemnation of the idea that the serving of particular interests is to be condoned. In his third dialogue, Berkeley has Alciphron argue:

Honour is a noble unpolluted Source of Virtue, without the least mixture of Fear, Interest or Superstition. It hath all the advantages without the evils which attend Religion. It is the mark of a great and fine soul, and is to be found among Persons of Rank and Breeding.³

The vocabulary of particular interests is used here completely pejoratively. Indeed, Alciphron's interlocutors go on to use the vocabulary in much the same way, arguing that 'an Infidel who sets up for the nicest Honour shall, without the least grain of Faith or

to respond to Mandeville's challenge, and to do so in a way that uses the terminology of interests. Thus, some canonical responses to Mandeville, such as that by William Law, have been omitted, since they do not use the vocabulary.

² E.g. Irwin 2008, pp. 476-90.

³ Berkeley 1732, vol. 1, p. 155.

Religion, pretend himself a Christian, take any test, join in any act of worship, kneel, pray, receive the Sacrament to serve an interest.⁴ We can thus see that Berkeley accepts Mandeville's distinction between interests and virtues, and thereby accepts the demoralization of interests.

This can be traced back to Berkeley's much earlier attack on civil dissent, entitled *Passive Obedience, or the Christian Doctrine Of Not Resisting the Supreme Power, proved and Vindicated upon the Principles of the Law of Nature* in which he demonstrates not only that virtue has nothing to do with private interest, but that neither can it be dictated by any form of common good or public utility. Berkeley begins, in his preface addressed to the reader, by setting up his discourse in opposition to those who would claim that the fundamental aim of government is to serve the common good:

That an Absolute Passive Obedience ought not to be paid any Civil Power: But that Submission to Government should be Measured and Limited by the Public Good of the Society; and that therefore Subjects may Lawfully Resist the Supreme Authority, in those Cases where the Public Good shall plainly seem to require it: Nay, that is their Duty to do so, inasmuch as they are all under an indispensable Obligation to promote the Common Interest: These and the like Notions, which I cannot help thinking Pernicious to Mankind and Repugnant to *Right Reason*, having of late Years been Industriously Cultivated, and set in the most Advantageous Lights by Men of Parts and Learning, it seemed necessary to Arm the Youth of our University against them, and take care they go into the World well Principled; I do not mean Obstinately Prejudiced in favour of a Party, but from an early Acquaintance with their Duty, and the clear Rational Grounds of it, Determined to such Practices as may speak them *Good Christians* and *Loyal Subjects*.⁵

In a sense, it might be argued, it is with this claim that we come to the most extreme denunciation of any concern for interests, in that not only particular interests, but even the collective interest of mankind is here being rejected in favour of the only objective force Berkeley can reach for: the will of the divine.⁶

⁴ Berkeley 1732, vol. 1, 160.

⁵ Berkeley 1712, pp. i-ii.

⁶ See also Darwall 2005), pp. 311-38.

We have seen that writers such as Richard Baxter had already criticised the idea that public peace can be served by individual human beings, since the individual has too much concern for themselves to truly serve the interest of the whole.⁷ Berkeley makes the same argument, stating that ‘it hath been ... shewn, that the great End of Morality can never be carried on, by leaving each particular Person to promote the Publick Good, in such a manner as he shall think most convenient’.⁸ In order to understand the moral law we need distance, ‘otherwise we are sure to be deceived, by the too near View of the little present Interests of our Selves, our Friends, our Country’.⁹ But Berkeley goes further, declaring that: ‘Nothing is a *Law* merely because it conduceth to the Publick Good of Mankind, but because it is decreed by the Will of God.’¹⁰ It is thus impossible for human interests to play any part in our considerations on how to live, either collectively or alone.

The influence of the French philosopher, Nicolas Malebranche, is evident in Berkeley’s suspicion of interests.¹¹ Indeed, Malebranche was influential upon a number of other English philosophers in the early-eighteenth century, among them John Norris, whose *Essay Towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World* had appeared in two parts in 1701 and 1704. Norris’s insistence on the existence of an ideal world, separate from the natural world in which we live and containing real, universal truths, was also a rejection of many of the conclusions of Locke’s *Essay*. Like Malebranche, Norris argues ‘Truth appears as she is’ and that when there is ‘no Prejudice in the Scale, she has Weight enough to turn it’.¹² However, when the material arguments of the physical world are brought to bear on questions about truth, ‘then that Truth which was before lookt upon

⁷ See chapter 4 above.

⁸ Berkeley 1712, pp. 22-3.

⁹ Berkeley 1712, pp. 23-4.

¹⁰ Berkeley 1712, p. 25.

¹¹ On the relationship between Berkeley and Malebranche, see McCracken 1983, pp. 205-53. McCracken does not seem to be concerned with the role that interest plays in this relationship.

¹² Norris 1701-4, vol. 1, p. 15.

as a thing in Common ... is now regarded as a *Property* ... as the Truth of such and such a Man, and so ... becomes also interested in those Personal prejudices that attend that Man'.¹³ In other words, the application of considerations of human interests to questions of truth will ultimately undermine truth.

III

We next turn to a philosopher who sought to attack Mandeville by defending Shaftesbury's conception of the 'moral sense' of mankind. Although his philosophy does seek to move on from a number of Shaftesbury's shortcomings, Hutcheson maintains his ultimate suspicion of the idea that private interests will serve the common good.

Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) was born, like Butler, the son of a Presbyterian minister, though he was raised in County Down in Ireland before moving to the University of Glasgow to study. Following Scottish suspicion of his Irish heritage, he was forced to return and founded his own academy in Dublin, where he produced *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* in 1725. The title page informs us that Hutcheson designs the work as a defence of Shaftesbury's moral philosophy against Mandeville.¹⁴ In the preface, he argues:

the *AUTHOR* of *NATURE* has much better furnished us for virtuous Conduct, than our *Moralists* seem to imagine, by almost as quick and powerful Instructions, as we have for the preservation of our Bodys; He has made *Virtue* a lovely *Form*, to excite out pursuit of it; and has given us *strong Affections* to be the Springs of each virtuous Action.¹⁵

Thus, Hutcheson is able to perform a kind of synthesis of Locke and Shaftesbury, as he assures his readers that he is not arguing from innate ideas, while at the same time retaining the notion of 'moral sense'. He achieves such a synthesis by arguing that the

¹³ Norris 1701-4, vol. 1, pp. 15-16. Norris makes little mention of interests in the remainder of the work.

¹⁴ Hutcheson 1725, sig. A, 1^r. See also Hundert 1994, pp. 80-2.

¹⁵ Hutcheson 1725, pp. vi-vii.

moral sense is not an idea, but an instinct which, when unimpeded, will orientate individuals towards what they perceive to be beautiful. Since God has created the world in order that virtue is naturally beautiful, they will naturally be orientated towards moral action. It is also by this standard that we can come to judge the actions of others.

‘It is true’, Hutcheson argues, ‘that the Actions we approve in others, are generally imagined to tend to the *natural Good* of *Mankind*, or that of some *Parts* of it.’¹⁶ But he is somewhat at a loss to understand where ‘this *secret Chain* between *each Person* and *Mankind* comes from.’¹⁷ Hutcheson seems to be much more concerned than Shaftesbury had ever been, to understand how our moral sense extends to those who are not immediately within our social reach. ‘If there is no *moral Sense*, which makes rational Actions appear *Beautiful* or *Deformed*, if all Approbation be from the *Interest* of the Approver, *What’s HECUBA to us, or we to HECUBA?*’¹⁸ It therefore quickly becomes clear that all human beings do not have such a ‘secret chain’ between their interest and the common good: although there is a chain (ensured by the existence of the ‘moral sense’), interest remains as a counterbalance to virtue.¹⁹

Hutcheson wants to argue that interests cannot possibly be our only motive for action, and that it is benevolence that drives authentically human behaviour. Philosophers such as Mandeville, he argues, ‘will rather twist *Self-Love* into a thousand Shapes, than allow any other Principle of Approbation than *Interest*’.²⁰ This moral stance is unsupportable, Hutcheson argues, since ‘*Self-Interest* will make us only esteem Men according to the *Good* they do to *our Selves*, and not give us high Ideas of *Public Good*’. For Hutcheson, the idea of ‘universal Benevolence’, which dictates that our allegiance is to

¹⁶ Hutcheson 1725, p. 111.

¹⁷ Hutcheson 1725, p. 111: ‘How is my *Interest* connected with the most distant *Parts* of it?’

¹⁸ Hutcheson 1725, pp. 111-12. Hecuba is the mythical Queen of Troy and wife of Priam. Hutcheson chooses her as his example presumably because she was the queen of a nation at war with the Greeks (the originators of Western philosophy and culture) and therefore naturally at odds with Western norms.

¹⁹ Hutcheson 1725, p. 116.

²⁰ Hutcheson 1725, p. 114.

the good of the whole, might ‘incline us to a more strong Concern for the Interests of *great and generous Characters* in a high Station, or make us more earnestly study the Interests of a generous *Society*, whose Constitution is contrived to promote *universal Good*’.²¹ But this is posited as the *only* reason for having strict ties to parties, sects, or even beneficent societies.

In all other situations, our interest is pitted against the interests of others. Hutcheson imagines a critic asking: ‘Whence arises ... *Benevolence* to good Men, or Mankind in general, if not from some nice Views of *Self-Interest*?’ and answers that, rather than being motivated by our interests, benevolence is a ‘generous Instinct’ originating in ‘the very *Frame* of our *Nature*’.²² In turn, he argues that ‘Hatred’ can only result ‘from opposition of *Interest*’.²³ Since love requires us to see others as parts of ourselves, our interests are unable to motivate us to love.²⁴ To choose to love based on a particular interest would prevent us from loving anyone in distress because we would fear the pain we were opening ourselves up to.²⁵

So, we can see that Hutcheson’s defence of Shaftesbury against Mandeville’s attacks, while not following Shaftesbury in every detail, retained his ultimate suspicion of private interests. Although Hutcheson, like Shaftesbury, wants to say that our natural inclinations point us to virtue, rather than vice, he cannot bring himself to say that the interests of individuals are the same as the interests of the whole, or even of other individuals.

²¹ Hutcheson 1725, pp. 165-7.

²² Hutcheson 1725, p. 131.

²³ Hutcheson 1725, p. 134.

²⁴ Hutcheson 1725, pp. 143-6.

²⁵ Hutcheson 1725, p. 142.

IV

One of Mandeville's constant refrains during his work, and especially in his replies to his critics, is the complaint that, despite much mudslinging, very little (if anything) has actually been said to *disprove* what he had written about the necessary conditions of the greatness of states, in his own terms.²⁶ In his rebuttal of Berkeley's objections, Mandeville points out that the idea that human laws and institutions can be directed to *anything other* than the public good is ludicrous, and that 'to quiet and satisfy all scrupulous Consciences, is as Drudgery as it is to write in Defence of Miracles'.²⁷ Once again, the inference is that, the state of people's consciences be what they will, the reality is that men will tend instead to focus on utility rather than any abstract notion of duty. He also goes on in the second volume of *The Fable*, published in 1728, to stress how important pride (a vice) is in causing men to be virtuous. Thus, it is *appearing* to do good which actually motivates virtue in human beings, rather than any free-floating divine imperatives (even if the latter are, as Mandeville is perfectly prepared to endorse, the sources of moral truth).

But there were those among Mandeville's critics who were prepared to address his claims on their own economic grounds. One such work was Thomas Bluet's *An Enquiry whether a general Practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People?* Bluet's main thesis seems to revolve around Mandeville's insistence that luxury is necessary for economic growth, to which he objects:

there is Latitude, even in Virtues, which leaves room for all the Conveniences, that he supposes are the Effects of the two Extrems of Avarice and Prodigality. 'Tis a trifling and perverse way of reasoning, to say, that a Man's *Frugality* does not supply Employments to the Poor; and that he does not save up Wealth by the Help of his *Liberality*.²⁸

²⁶ Mandeville 1732, pp. 21-2.

²⁷ Mandeville 1732, pp. 43-4, 63.

²⁸ [Bluet] 1725, pp. 36-7.

An important corollary of this argument is that the practice of frugality can be deployed to generate wealth, rather than simply as a way of surviving hard times, as Mandeville had argued. As in the latter's case, Bluet's main evidence came from Holland. Mandeville, says Bluet, claims that 'the *Dutch* never were noted for Frugality before *Philip* II. of *Spain* began to tyrannise over them ... nor were they ever noted for their *Wealth* till then, nor till some Time after'.²⁹ The other major ground on which Bluet challenges Mandeville is on latter's expectation that vice can be turned to serve virtue. On the contrary, Bluet argues, 'Vices as well as Virtues may be observed to have a Connexion with one another'.³⁰ He goes on to explain that when Mandeville advocates allowing some vices to exist in order to prevent greater ones, he is simply naïve, and that the toleration of vice will always lead to greater and greater vice.³¹

Bluet's attempt at a critique was followed by another anonymous treatise which tries to explain *The True Meaning of the Fable of the Bees*. Indeed, of all the authors discussed here, this strikes closest to the heart of Mandeville's thesis, by seeking to show that Mandeville did not in fact *argue* (let alone prove) that private vices made public benefits. Beginning by addressing Bluet's argument, the author states:

You have indeed proved [against Mandeville] that Virtue tends to the real Welfare and Happiness of a Nation; but pray Sir, look again; is the contrary to this maintained by the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*? I venture to say it is not, and that if you search to the bottom, you'll find that you have quite misunderstood him in this particular.³²

Instead, the author suggests, Mandeville has in fact constructed a system in which private vices are turned to *private* benefit. In this case, the person being benefited is the politician:

Private Vices are for the *Politician's* Benefit; the very Essence of his Pleasures consists in Vice, his whole Actings are injurious to others, and his sole Aim is to make *them deny their Appetites, that he may indulge his own without Interruption; reap the fruit*

²⁹ [Bluet] 1725, p. 43.

³⁰ [Bluet] 1725, p. 139.

³¹ [Bluet] 1725, pp. 139-74.

³² *The True Meaning of the Fable of the Bees* 1726, pp. 4-5.

*of their Labours of Self-denial, and arrive to the top of worldly Glory by transferring their happiness to himself.*³³

It is by studying the passages in which Mandeville discusses the scheming politicians, this author argues, that we are best ‘satisfied whose Interest is alone at our Author’s Heart’.³⁴ Thus, if we continue to assume that Mandeville has some features in common with Machiavelli, we might say that he is aligned here much more with the politician of the *The Prince*, than of the *Discourses*.

Another novel intervention against Mandeville, which also makes some attempt to address him on his own terms, came from the pen of Archibald Campbell, who composed his *Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue* at some point in the mid-1720s.³⁵ While he clearly was very much influenced by his fellow Scot, Hutcheson, Campbell is also keen to distance himself from too close a tie. His publisher, Alexander Innes’s prefatory letter recognises this, as he points out that the third part of the treatise is aimed not only against *The Fable*, but also Hutcheson’s *Enquiry*, a work which ‘did not consult the Nature of Things’, and continues ‘he [Hutcheson] and you [Mandeville] are on *Extremes*, the one Being all *Soul*, and the other all *Body*,’ while ‘both of you forget to join

³³ *The True Meaning of the Fable of the Bees* 1725, p. 11.

³⁴ *The True Meaning of the Fable of the Bees* 1725, pp. 59-60.

³⁵ The history of the text itself is worthy of some comment. Having composed the text in Edinburgh, Campbell sent his manuscript to his friend, Alexander Innes, for publication in London. The result of this seems to be that Innes published the book under his own name, and with the revised title, *APETH-AOFLA or, an Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue* in February or March 1728. Innes also took the liberty of appending his own prefatory letter, which he signs with his initials. This preface takes a highly vitriolic tone, not at all in keeping with the philosophical mode of Campbell’s treatise, though it does contain passages from Campbell’s introduction to *A Enquiry*. Mandeville himself notices a piece in the *London Evening Post* of 9 March describing an incident at the ‘Bonfire before St. James Gate’, at which someone posing as him ceremonially burned a copy of *The Fable of the Bees*, and linked it with the claim made at the end of Innes’s preface to the fact that he had successfully proved Mandeville wrong, thus compelling him to burn his own book (Mandeville 1733, pp. xxvi-xxx). It seems clear that at least his Edinburgh neighbours knew that Campbell was the true author, as John Hunter’s reply addresses Campbell directly in its title as early as 1731.

Soul and *Body* together, in the *Union* of which the *Essence* of *Human Nature* does consist'.³⁶

In Campbell's own later and reordered edition, he himself states:

A late Book, intituled *An Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, has fallen into my Hands, wherein, it may be thought, these Things are set in a quite contrary Light: I shall therefore here Endeavour ... to give a further Explanation of my Principles, and consider ... those Particulars, in which this ingenious Author and I do not seem so well to accord.³⁷

Thus, Campbell's aim was to steer a middle course between Hutcheson's unrealistic expectations and Mandeville's malicious cynicism. He aims to achieve this middle course by establishing the foundation of human behaviour on self-love and the desire for esteem, but twisting the implications of this to prevent the conclusions to which Mandeville had come. He argues instead that man's natural desire for society would outweigh his selfish instincts, causing him to emerge naturally from the state of nature. He spends considerable time at the outset of his treatise establishing that we have such a strong 'social Disposition', which 'powerfully prompts us to mix with one another'.³⁸ 'It is pretended' by philosophers such as Hobbes, Campbell argues, 'that *all Men have, in their inward Constitution, a mischievous Propension to hurt one another*', whereas the evidence shows that 'on the contrary' human beings are 'delighted in seeing Multitudes of ... [their] Fellow-men'.³⁹ From this point, it is no leap at all to claim that men and women are naturally designed to serve the interests of others.

Campbell even goes so far as to say that those 'Pursuits, wherein we are mischievous to each other' arise not out of true malice, but 'do originally come from kind benevolent Affections towards our Fellow-men'.⁴⁰ Thus, we find an essentially stoic conception of society, in which human beings are presented as together constituting a perfect whole, which has to be accorded with by each individual in order to fulfil the conditions of their

³⁶ [Campbell] 1728, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

³⁷ Campbell 1733, pp. 257-8.

³⁸ Campbell 1733, p. 18.

³⁹ Campbell 1733, pp. 21-5.

⁴⁰ Campbell 1733, pp. 26-7.

own happiness. 'This in turn leads to the conclusion that 'no Man can afflict his *Fellow*, without being himself a *Sufferer*'.⁴¹ Campbell suggests that 'our Love of them concurring with that Love which they bear for themselves, will give us a hearty Concern for their Interest, and powerfully carry us on, as being all moved by the same common Spring, in promoting their Welfare and Happiness.'⁴² In following Campbell down this path of reasoning, we might be drawn to the conclusion that he is making the same argument we shall soon see in Butler: that there is a natural affinity between our interests and the common good. But he never actually makes this claim, as the emphasis is continually on our natural and rational disposition towards serving the interests of *others*. It continues to be implied that simply looking out for our own interest will not serve the common good.

V

Joseph Butler (1692-1752) was born the son of a Presbyterian minister, and until 1714 it seems that he intended to follow the same trajectory. But at the age of about 21, upon completion of his studies at the dissenting academy in Tewkesbury, Butler turned instead towards the Church of England, in which he remained for the rest of his life, and which formed the context for his major works.⁴³ The only writings remaining from Butler's years at Tewkesbury are his letters to Samuel Clarke, written in 1713-17, some of which were considered important enough by Clarke to have them published in later editions of his Boyle Lectures.⁴⁴ The last of these were written from Oriel College, Oxford, where Butler matriculated in December 1715.⁴⁵ Butler's first appointment was as lecturer at the Rolls Chapel. It was during this appointment that he delivered the sermons that would be included in his collection of 1726.

⁴¹ Campbell 1733, p. 30.

⁴² Campbell 1733, p. 124.

⁴³ On why Butler left Tewkesbury to study at Oxford, see Ramsey 1969, pp. 5-14.

⁴⁴ See Clarke 1998, pp. 95-111.

⁴⁵ Tennant 2011, p. 30.

In the later 1720s, he moved to Stanhope, and in 1729 the *Fifteen Sermons* were republished, along with a new preface and a number of improving revisions to the main text. Thence he moved to the bishopric of Bristol, following the publication of his *Analogy of Religion* (1736), which was to be considered by many to constitute the last word in the dispute with the Deists. Butler continued to give public sermons, and in 1748, a fourth edition of the *Fifteen Sermons* was published, in which was included six such sermons. Shortly after this, Butler was translated to the bishopric of Durham (a much more prestigious appointment than Bristol, though it has been speculated that he was nearly offered the See of Canterbury in the mid-1740s). Having become bishop in 1750, Butler produced just one more minor publication before his death in 1752. It is significant that the only sources we have for Butler's thought are his printed works, since he ordered that everything else be destroyed upon his death. Only a few letters and fragments survive.⁴⁶ It might be speculated that it was this paucity of archival material that has made Butler's works so iconic.

Butler came to be very influential on future political and moral theory, particularly that of David Hume. Hume acknowledges Butler's influence in the preface to his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1738) and actually sent a copy to Butler in draft, claiming to have edited certain parts of it in accordance with the reaction he expected he might receive from the bishop.⁴⁷ The admiration went both ways: Hume mentions in a letter that Butler was recommending his *Essays* to readers in London.⁴⁸ Hutcheson claimed to be influenced by Butler early on, though realised how different they were later in his writing.⁴⁹ The moral theory laid out in 1751 by Henry Home, Lord Kames owes a similar

⁴⁶ As well as pointing to a number of attributed sermons unlikely to have been written by him, Butler's nineteenth-century editor, Edward Steere, tantalizingly suggests that there exist five extant manuscript sermons, one of which is a copy of a sermon by Isaac Barrow (Steere 1862, pp. xxxiv-xxxv).

⁴⁷ Hume 1739, p. 6; Mossner 1936, pp. 156-8; Mossner 1970, pp. 73-4.

⁴⁸ Garrett 2012, pp. 169-70; Gay 1973, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Rivers 2000, pp. 163-4.

debt to Butler's *Sermons*, and, as with Hume, this is despite a clear sympathy on Kames's behalf towards the Deists.⁵⁰ Adam Smith lists Butler among those to make a major impact on English philosophy, including Hobbes, Locke and Mandeville.⁵¹ Finally, Butler was standard reading for anyone concerned with either ethics or theology throughout most of the nineteenth century.⁵²

Butler suggests a novel way of solving the clash between particular interests and the common good. His solution is simply to suggest that, when our interests are properly understood, there is in fact no such clash, and for Butler this is intimately related to the argument (which we have already encountered in chapter 4) that it is in fact obligatory to pursue that which is in our interest, and therefore integral to our duty. He goes on to assert further, that such interests are in fact usually plainer to us than we often believe. In his sermon entitled 'The Natural Supremacy of Conscience', he asserts that

It is manifest that, in the common Course of Life, there is seldom any Inconsistency between our Duty and what is *called* Interest: It is much seldomer that there is an inconsistency between Duty and what is really our present Interest; meaning by Interest, Happiness and Satisfaction. Self-love then, though confined to the Interest of the present World, does in general perfectly coincide with Virtue, and leads us to one and the same Course of Life.⁵³

We can easily see why Butler owes his biggest debt to the latitude-men, whom I discussed in chapter 4. But I would suggest that Butler goes much farther: he argues that,

⁵⁰ Home 1751, pp. 61-4.

⁵¹ Smith 1980, p. 250. See also Smith 2002, p. 17. For a juxtaposition of Butler and Smith's thought, as well as that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, see: Forman-Barzilai 2010, pp. 38-49. Butler appears to have been generally very influential on the later Scottish Enlightenment. On influence in Aberdeen in particular, see Carey 2006, p. 188; Wood 1993, esp. ch. 5.

⁵² See Garnett 1992, pp. 63-96; Hilton 2000, pp. 190-3; Tennant 2011, ch. 6.

⁵³ Butler 1749, pp. 54-5. In order to be able to quote continuously between the fifteen original sermons and the six additional sermons, all references here will be from the fourth edition (1749). However, I make reference to variations between this text and the other three editions. In particular, there are a number of important changes between the first edition of 1726 and the second edition of 1729. Furthermore, although David E. White's collection of *The Works of Joseph Butler* (2006) has been helpful to me in a number of instances, it does not offer enough scholarly depth (particularly regarding variant readings) to warrant classification as a critical edition, and therefore I have stuck to the eighteenth-century editions in references.

not only do our interests coincide with moral virtue, but they also serve the common good.

In studying this aspect of his thought, I am attempting to take current scholarship on Butler into so far uncharted terrain. Instead of focusing (as others have done) on Butler's contribution to moral debate in which the terms of reference remain essentially the same, I seek to place him in the historical debate about the duty owed to the common good, and its relation to private interests. Previous scholars have focused on how Butler prioritises the categories of self-interest, benevolence and conscience in his conception of human nature.⁵⁴ This is not an illogical way to go about understanding Butler's moral thought, but it does tend to impose on Butler a vocabulary and a set of assumptions he does not hold, and are only vaguely referenced in his texts.

Often, scholars focus upon Butler's engagement with the ideas of Hobbes and (to a lesser extent) La Rochefoucauld. This conclusion is partly based upon the extended footnote, dedicated to a discussion of these two thinkers, in the preface, added to the second edition of the *Sermons* in 1729, and partly on the assumption that Hobbes was the predominant subject of attack by Christian apologetics in this period.⁵⁵ Although he never mentions Mandeville by name in any of his works, it seems prudent to work under the assumption that Butler has *The Fable* and its moral pessimism in his sights.⁵⁶

Butler's reaction to Mandeville is not to condemn the pursuit of interest (by reaffirming the antimony between interest and virtue), or to deny that the public good will require the sacrificing of individual interests (as a theorist like Hobbes would). Rather, Butler's reaction is to admit that, in order to serve the common good we do have

⁵⁴ Darwall 1992; Duncan-Jones 1952; Frey 1992; Henson 1988; Penelhum 1985; Phillips 2000; Sober, 1992; Wedgwood 2008.

⁵⁵ See Tennant 2011, ch. 2.

⁵⁶ Hundert 1994, p. 126.

to look to what is in our own private interests. At the same time, he seeks to reassure his more conservative audiences that acting in this way continues to be morally virtuous.

It is not simply the case that Butler somehow combines a concern with our own interests with a concern for the interests of others.⁵⁷ Hundert is almost correct to say that Butler ‘presents virtuous and benevolent actions as an exercise of self-denial, but of a prudent calculation of our own long-term interests which may fully accord with the dictates of morality’.⁵⁸ Although it is true that Butler wants to contest Mandeville’s assumption of the antimony between interests and moral virtue, he never really distinguishes between long-term and short-term interests. His aim is at once more profound and more potentially complacent: to argue that the particular interests of individuals and the interest of the whole are in fact identical.

VI

It seems apposite at this point to admit that there are potential precedents for the claim about the natural coincidence of particular interests and the common good. We have already seen that Shaftesbury (most often cited as one of Butler’s principal influence) is misinterpreted as making this claim.⁵⁹ Richard Cumberland, whose *De legibus naturae* appeared in Latin in 1672, and was translated (paraphrased might be more accurate) into English by James Tyrell in 1693, is another writer who is sometimes named as a proponent of this position.

Cumberland is very important in Gunn’s account of the development of the modern (liberal) form of ‘public interest’, in which all the particular interests of individuals is comprehended. Gunn argues that, although Cumberland wrote *De legibus naturae* in Latin in the 1670s, and therefore could not have employed the English vocabulary of interest,

⁵⁷ See introduction above. I am here responding to Tennant 2011, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Hundert 1994, p. 131.

⁵⁹ See chapter 6 above.

it is acceptable to take Tyrell's references to interest in his paraphrase as bearing Cumberland's original intentions.⁶⁰ Perhaps the most important reference to interests comes in the preface to the main work. Tyrell's paraphrase runs as follows:

I suppose you are not ignorant, that the Study of Moral Philosophy, or the Laws of Nature, was preferred (by *Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and Tully*, the wisest of the Heathen Philosophers) above all other knowledge, whether Natural or Civil, and that deservedly, as well in respect of its usefulness, as certainty, since it was to that alone (as most agreeable to the Natural Faculties of Mankind) that Men, before they were assisted by Divine Revelation, owed the Discovery of their Natural Duties, to God, to themselves, and all others: as *Cicero* hath shewn us at large in those three excellent Treatises, *De Officiis, De Finibus*, and *De Legibus*. And though I grant we Christians have now clearer and higher Discoveries of all Moral Duties, by the Light of the Gospel, yet is the Knowledge of Natural Religion, or the Laws of Nature, still of great use to us, as well for the confirmation as illustration of all those Duties, since by their Knowledge, and the true Principles on which they are founded, we may be convinced, that God requires nothing of us in all the practical Duties of revealed Religion, but our reasonable Service; that is, what is really our own interest, and concerns our good and happiness to observe, as the best and most perfect Rule of Life, whether God had ever farther enforced them or not by any revealed Law.⁶¹

Thus, as with the men of latitude whom we encountered in chapter 4, Tyrell wants to stress an identity between what is in our interest, and what is in our duty. Furthermore, he wants to say, this is the case whether or not God makes it so explicitly.

John Locke set a further precedent in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which was first published in 1689. In the third chapter, Locke points to the lack of moral consensus as proof of the non-existence of innate practical principles, and argues that 'there cannot any one Rule be proposed, whereof a Man may no justly demand a Reason'.⁶² He admits the imperative to uphold contracts might seem universal, but goes on to show that different people will have different reasons for believing this to be so; Christians will appeal to the authority of God, Hobbists will argue that 'the Publick

⁶⁰ Gunn 1969, p. 285.

⁶¹ Tyrell 1693, sig. B, 4^{r-v}.

⁶² Locke 1975, p. 68. I am also much indebted to Pauline Phemister's very accessible abridged edition of *The Essay* (2008).

requires it, and the *Leviathan* will punish you, if you do not', and ancient philosophers would see the shame of breaking contracts as being 'below the Dignity of Man, and opposite to Vertue'.⁶³ Although Locke himself admits the existence of and obedience owed God, he still insists:

it must be allowed, That several Moral Rules, may receive, from Mankind, a very general Approbation, without either knowing, or admitting the true ground of Morality; which can only be the Will and Law of God, who sees Man in the dark, has in his Hand Rewards and Punishments, and Power enough to call to account the Proudest Offender.⁶⁴

This point is born of the notion that lies at the foundation of Locke's moral philosophy: that individuals can only be moved to act by things that are for their good. Towards the end of the *Essay*, Locke argues that 'it is rational to conclude, that our proper Employment lies in those Enquiries, and in that sort of knowledge, which is most suited to our natural Capacities, and carries in it our greatest interest', our 'greatest interest' here being 'the Condition of our eternal Estate'.⁶⁵ It is for this reason that God has, 'by an inseparable connexion, joined *Virtue* and publick Happiness together', and thereby made virtuous conduct necessary to further the good of society.⁶⁶

Locke argues that since the individual good is bound up with the good of the whole, 'it is no wonder that every one should, not only allow, but recommend, and magnify those Rules to others, from whose observance of them, he is sure to reap Advantage to himself'. Therefore, it is not only out of 'Conviction', but also 'Interest' that morality is to be encouraged.⁶⁷ But, although virtuous action is a prerequisite for the attainment of our good, this is not enough for us to conclude that virtue is an innate principle, 'since we find that 'self-Interest and the Conveniences of this Life, make many Men own an outward Profession and Approbation of them, whose Actions sufficiently prove, that

⁶³ Locke 1975, p. 68.

⁶⁴ Locke 1975, p. 69.

⁶⁵ Locke 1975, p. 646.

⁶⁶ Locke 1975, p. 69.

⁶⁷ Locke 1975, p. 69.

they very little consider the Law-giver, that prescribed these Rules'.⁶⁸ Later, in chapter 28 ('Of other Relations'), Locke argues that, despite 'the different Temper, Education, Fashion, Maxims, or Interest of different sorts of Men', there is a 'common *measure of Virtue and Vice*', which most people subscribe to.⁶⁹ 'Therefore', he argues, 'Men, without renouncing all Sense and Reason, and their own Interest, which they are so constantly true to, could not generally mistake, in placing their Commendation and Blame on that side, that really deserved it not'.⁷⁰ In other words, the interests of people living in different nations will only differ to a certain extent, there being interests that are common to all mankind.

In his chapter on 'The Abuse of Words', Locke describes the 'abundance of empty unintelligible noise and jargon' which comes as a result of our attempts to reason about our 'Tenets and Interests'.⁷¹ He blames the 'Interest and Artifice' of 'unscholastick Statesmen' for limiting our understanding of our political language.⁷² Furthermore, in the book 4, chapter 3, in reflecting on the limits of our human knowledge, Locke writes about how 'Falsehood' has been in order 'to maintain a System, Interest or Party'.⁷³ Later in the same chapter, Locke defends the possibility of the 'Demonstration and Knowledge' of things beyond mere '*Ideas of Quantity*', and argues that the only things that stand in opposition to such knowledge are 'Vices, Passions, and domineering Interest'.⁷⁴ So, it is clear that Locke does not advocate a very stable relationship between particular interests and the common good.

⁶⁸ Locke 1975, p. 69.

⁶⁹ Locke 1975, pp. 354-6.

⁷⁰ Locke 1975, p. 356.

⁷¹ Locke 1975, p. 492. This can be related back to the parallels I draw in chapter 5 between Locke's comments in the *Second Treatise* and Hobbes's worry about our 'turns' and 'interests' influencing our use of words.

⁷² Locke 1975, p. 495.

⁷³ Locke 1975, p. 540.

⁷⁴ Locke 1975, p. 549.

It is important to point out that even this very unstable claim to the identity of interest and common good is peculiar to *The Essay*. As we have seen, in his *Second Treatise*, Locke is suspicious of the effect of particular interests, and in his earliest political work, Locke contrasts the common good with the private interests of individuals:

The magistrate in his constitutions regards the public concernment and not the private opinions which, biased by their own interest, or misled by their ignorance and indiscretion, are like to make them but ill judges of reasons of state or the equity of laws; and when we find the greatest part of men usually complaining, we may easily conclude, that they think that precept of “do as thou wouldst be done unto” but ill observed by their superiors. Were magistrates to gratify the desires of men in all things to which by a partial interpretation they would extend this rule, they would quickly stand in need of a power not to make laws but worlds, and provide enlargements no restraints for the liberty of their subjects.⁷⁵

In this case, interests are associated with men’s most base desires. Locke’s early writings are therefore resistant to the argument that each person’s interest originates in nature, partly because he wants to distance himself from the claim that we might return that state of nature in which everyone can pursue their own self-interest.⁷⁶

However, Locke goes on to argue that *in reality* all private interests serve the common good; it is simply our desire to dominate others, and dictate the actions of others (whose interests we are likely to ignore or misunderstand):

When we say that each man’s personal interest is not the basis of natural law, we do not wish to be understood to say that the common rules of human equity and each man’s private interest are opposed to one another, for the strongest protection of each man’s private property is the law of nature, without the observance of which it is impossible for anybody to be master of his property and to pursue his own advantage. Hence it will be clear to anyone who candidly considers for himself the human race and the practices of men that nothing contributes so much to the general welfare of each and so effectively keep men’s possessions safe and secure as the observance of natural law. Nevertheless we do deny that each person is at liberty to do what he himself, according to

⁷⁵ John Locke, *First Tract on Government* (1660), in *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge, 1997), 21-2.

⁷⁶ John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1664), in *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge, 1997), 127-8. In the case of the essays, Goldie relies upon a translation from the Latin made by von Leyden in 1954, and so we know that Locke is not the one using the vocabulary of interests. I am therefore able to cite the work merely as context.

circumstances, judges to be of advantage to him. You have certainly no reason for holding that each man's private interest is the standard of what is just and right, unless you let every single man be judge in his own case and himself determine what is in his own interest, seeing that no one can be a fair and just appraiser of another's advantages; and you deceive a man with what is only a semblance of utility, if you say he is permitted to do what is useful and yet what is not useful.⁷⁷

'Unless you let each man be judge in his own case': a situation that is never likely to occur in political society. And indeed, this quotation demonstrates the immense debt the young Locke owed to Hobbes.

Gunn argues that Locke was not ultimately responsible for producing a theory of the harmony of particular interests and the common good. Although 'he thought that each was wrong in seeing the other interest as a hindrance to its prosperity', Locke 'saw too that it might sometimes be necessary to choose between the two'.⁷⁸ Here Gunn seems to be correct: Locke might be arguing that private and public goods are the same when removed from the scrutiny of subjective human demands, but is unable to maintain this claim when such subjectivity is no longer kept at bay. Butler appears to be a much better candidate to fulfil this role.

VII

Although Butler acknowledges at one point that men's interests are 'various', he argues that, when they are properly understood, they will necessarily serve the common good.⁷⁹ As he argues against those sceptical as to man's capacity for compassion, 'there is a much more exact Correspondence between the natural and moral World than we are apt to take Notice of'.⁸⁰ Butler is also careful to maintain that the idea of following nature does not mean following every impulse we naturally find within ourselves. 'If by following

⁷⁷ Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, 128-9.

⁷⁸ Gunn 1969, p. 293.

⁷⁹ Butler 1749, p. 75.

⁸⁰ Butler 1749, p. 101.

Nature we meant only acting as we please,' he argues, 'it would indeed be ridiculous to speak of Nature as any Guide to Morals.'⁸¹ He also suggests that this would make 'the very mention of deviating from Nature ... absurd'.⁸² Thus, it must be the case that nature such that 'only acting as we please' does not constitute our interest.

What it is perhaps most important to understand in Butler's treatment of interests is his distinction between particular interests and the passion of self-love. He states it succinctly: 'Happiness does not consist in Self-love.'⁸³ Rather, happiness consists in understanding and pursuing what is in our interest, which is part of a universal structure of interests, in a naturally concurrent web. This web is orientated towards a divine plan upon which Butler does not feel it necessary to elaborate too much. Thus, following our interests will not necessarily involve pursuing the immediate objects of our affection, though, as Butler continually points out, our affections have been given to us in order to help us pursue our interests, and therefore the truth of what our interests are has to be located in those affections which all men have. As we shall see later, this involved Butler's acceptance of Mandeville's claim that philosophy had to attempt to see men *as they are* rather than *as they ought to be*.

Butler claims that 'Immoderate Self-love does very ill consult its own Interests'.⁸⁴ In the first edition of the *Sermons*, he then goes on to argue that

since Self-love is not private Good, [and] since Interestedness is not Interest; let us now see whether Benevolence has not the same Respect to, the same Tendency toward promoting, private Good and Interest, with the other particular Passions; as it hath already been shewn, that they have all in common the same Respect to Self-love and Interestedness.⁸⁵

In the second edition (1729), Butler makes no mention of this dichotomization between self-love and private good, and between 'Interestedness' and 'Interest'. Indeed, the

⁸¹ Butler 1749, p. 31.

⁸² Butler 1749, p. 31.

⁸³ Butler 1749, pp. 209-10.

⁸⁴ Butler 1749, pp. 211-12.

⁸⁵ Butler 1726, p. 214.

question as it is posed in the subsequent editions is generally much clearer. He claims that he simply wants to ask ‘whether there be any greater Competition between the Pursuit of private and of publick Good, than between any other particular Pursuits and that of private Good’.⁸⁶

Butler’s conclusion (present in the first edition and retained thereafter) is that where his actions are successful, ‘the Man of Benevolence hath as great Enjoyment as the Man of Ambition’.⁸⁷ But, while in successful situations the ‘Man of Benevolence’ and the ‘Man of Ambition’ are equal – ‘both equally having the End [of] their Affections, in the same Degree, tended to’ – in unsuccessful circumstances, ‘the benevolent Man has clearly the Advantage’, because ‘Benevolence, considered as a Principle of Virtue, is gratified by its own Consciousness, *i.e.* is in a Degree its own Reward’.⁸⁸ Benevolence does not have to be in our interests in order to be rewarding.

Butler’s Victorian editor, William Whewell remarks that, at this stage in his theory, ‘Butler urges that we may not only say that Virtue is disinterested, but also that Hatred and Revenge are so; because in feeling them, we do not aim at our own interest’, although we might ‘imagine *ourselves* as persons who have a pleasure, and therefore an interest, in the gratification of this hatred or revenge’.⁸⁹ It should be clarified that Butler is not arguing that Virtue is always disinterested. Indeed, he wants to say that acting virtuously is in our interest. What he merely wants to reflect upon, is the fact that disinterested viciousness is possible.

Vice does not consist in following our interest too much. Rather, ‘Vice in general consists in having an unreasonable and too great Regard to ourselves, in Comparison of others’.⁹⁰ Thus, the source of vice is not having too much concern for our interests (and

⁸⁶ Butler 1749, p. 217.

⁸⁷ Butler 1749, p. 219.

⁸⁸ Butler 1749, p. 219.

⁸⁹ Whewell 1849, p. viii.

⁹⁰ Butler 1749, pp. 186-7.

hence our duties), but in having too much regard for ourselves. Butler makes it clear in his first sermon that it is just as common for people to fail to pursue their own interests as it is for them to fail to act benevolently towards one another.⁹¹ Because our interests are part of a divinely-governed system of needs, we are able to distance them from our *selves*, but Butler also argues that our self-love has been somehow designed to give us insight into our true interest. This is why it is so important that our passionate self-love is moderated by our interests. This is also why it is so important to stress that Butler has no concept of self-*interest*.⁹²

By creating this conceptual distance between interest and self-love, Butler was able to present interest as the determining factor in the ensuring of justice in society. In particular, he came to rely on it in his justification of punishment. He argued that ‘men are plainly restrained from injuring their Fellow-creatures by Fear of their Resentment; and it is very happy that they are so, when they would not be restrained by a Principle of Virtue’.⁹³ He implores us to see that ‘Mankind is a Community, that we all stand in a Relation to each other, that there is a publick Interest of Society which each Particular is obliged to promote’ and which ‘is the sum of Morals. Consider then the Passion of Resentment, as given this one Body, as given to Society.’⁹⁴ Thus, Butler emphasises that the social utility of punishment is to show men that they have strayed from their real interest.

VIII

The preface added to the beginning of the second edition of the *Sermons*, published in 1729, does much to clarify Butler’s position, particularly regarding the role of interests in

⁹¹ Butler 1749, p. 21.

⁹² Cf. Rivers 2000, vol. 2, ch. 3.

⁹³ Butler 1749, p. 152.

⁹⁴ Butler 1749, p. 162.

his scheme. He reaffirms that ‘benevolence is not more unfriendly to Self-love, than an other particular Affection whatever’ and that ‘Interest, one’s own Happiness, is a manifest Obligation’.⁹⁵ He adds to this discussion the idea of disinterestedness and its apparent claim to indicate virtue. A large portion of the preface is then given over to a refutation of this very notion. ‘Benevolence’, Butler argues, ‘is no more disinterested than any of the common particular Passions’, and therefore, ‘disinterestedness is so far from being in itself commendable, that the utmost possible Depravity, which we can in Imagination conceive, is that of disinterested Cruelty’.⁹⁶ Furthermore, he goes on to attack Hobbes and La Rochefoucauld, not for *scorning benevolence* (as most of his contemporaries would) but for *misunderstanding interests*:

There is a strange Affectation in many People of explaining away all particular Affections, and representing the whole of Life as nothing but one continued Exercise of Self-love. Hence arises that surprising Confusion and Perplexity in the *Epicureans* of old, *Hobbs*, the Author of *Reflexions Sentences et Maxims Morales*, and this whole Sett of Writers; the Confusion of calling Actions interested which are done in Contradiction to the most manifest known Interest, merely for the Gratification of a present Passion.⁹⁷

The point being made here is that interests are much safer than passions in that they have limits; they are bounded by factors such as nature and conformity with the common good. Passions, on the other hand, are always liable to be excessive – and this is in their nature. Indeed, Butler goes on to reassure his readers that, although this clearly means that it is possible for us to be mistaken about our interests, such mistakes are not as dangerous as those we make about our passions:

with all the Mistakes Men would fall into about Interest, it would be less mischievous, than the Extravagancies of mere Appetite, Will and Pleasure: For certainly Self-love, though confined to the Interest of this Life, is, of the two, a much better Guide than Passion, which has absolutely no Bound nor Measure, but what is set to it by this Self-love, or Moral Considerations.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Butler 1749, pp. xxiv-xxv, xvii-xviii.

⁹⁶ Butler 1749, pp. xxviii-xxx.

⁹⁷ Butler 1749, pp. xxiv-xxvi.

⁹⁸ Butler 1749, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

Butler uses the preface to reinforce the fact that passionate self-love *must* be bounded and moderated by the power of our interests.

This is a theme Butler takes up again in his *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed* (1736), in which he argues that Men are often misled into following the course of ‘present Gratification’ in favour of ‘our temporal Interest’ and it is this possibility that constitutes our state of trial:

Particular Passions are no more coincident with Prudence, or that reasonable Self-love, the End of which is our worldly Interest, than they are, with the Principle of Virtue and Religion; but often draw contrary ways to one as well as to the other: and so such particular Passions are as much Temptations, to act imprudently with regard to our worldly Interest, as to act vitiously.⁹⁹

It seems clear that Butler considers self-denial important, but he does so, as he thinks this is the best way for us to understand what our true interest is.¹⁰⁰ Our state of trial is expressed here in terms of which way our self-love will take us; either it will follow our divinely-inspired interest, or be corrupted by private and particular passions. Thus, in this work written ten years after the original *Fifteen Sermons*, Butler continues to stress the difference between the service of the ‘self’ which he talks of in pejorative terms, and the service of our properly understood interest, which is a kind of disposition given to us by the divine.

As I have already stressed, it is important to see Butler as working within the tradition of moderate Anglican thought which we have encountered in earlier chapters, and which sought above all to reassure the public that our duties serve our everyday concerns. This involved a rejection of the Calvinist Puritanism in which Butler was brought up. As well as arguing (as we have seen) against the fatalist doctrine of predestination, in the *Analogy* Butler seems to argue against the notion that worldly interests and worldly consumption

⁹⁹ Butler 1736a, pp. 72-4.

¹⁰⁰ Butler 1736a, p. 78.

were to be seen as threats to Godliness. In this, he builds on a number of Anglican sermonisers of the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, who had begun to make a similar move. Such moves, I shall argue, were those which make it possible for Butler to argue that ‘to act imprudently with regard to our worldly Interest’ is the same ‘as to act vitiously’.¹⁰¹

IX

Finally, we should consider the six sermons preached on public occasions, which Butler annexed to the fourth edition of his original *Fifteen Sermons*. These give a much fuller flavour of his thought, as they are addressed less to issues of personal morality, and more to public issues of political obligation and the duty of the rich to the poor. Education is also a central issue for Butler here, and he is keen to stress that it is not only in the public interest for the poor to be educated, but in the interest of the self-preservation of each.¹⁰² One fundamental problem Butler addresses is that of superstition. It is argued that superstition will prevent people from knowing what is in their true interest, and that education is therefore crucial in ensuring that interests are fulfilled: ‘It is true indeed, Children may be taught Superstition, under the Notion of Prudence, they may be educated in great Mistakes as to the Nature of real Interest and Good, respecting the present World.’¹⁰³

Although Butler argues for a natural harmony of interests and the common good, he also recognises the need for education and instruction, since an understanding of our true interests does not come quite so naturally. This point is drawn out most potently in his *Charge Delivered to the Clergy at the Primary Visitation of the Diocese of Durham* (commonly known as the *Durham Charge*), which is perhaps the only surviving relic of Butler’s time as

¹⁰¹ Butler 1736a, pp. 72-3.

¹⁰² Butler 1749, p. 431.

¹⁰³ Butler 1749, p. 411.

Bishop there. 'Publick instruction', he argues, 'is absolutely necessary and can in no Sort be dispensed with.'¹⁰⁴ He addresses his prelates with the argument that 'the Want of Religion in the Generality of the common People' does not originate in 'a speculative Disbelief, or Denial of it, but chiefly to Thoughtlessness and the common Temptations of Life'.¹⁰⁵

'General Exhortations to Piety, abstracted from the Particular Circumstances of it, are of great Use', Butler argues, only 'to such as are already got into a religious Course of Life'.¹⁰⁶ Thus, he instructs his listeners that it is their 'chief Business ... to endeavour to beget a practical Sense of it upon their Hearts, as what they acknowledge their Belief of, and profess they ought to conform themselves to'.¹⁰⁷ This effect is best achieved by their 'keeping up ... the Form and Face of Religion with Decency and Reverence, to such a Degree as to bring the Thoughts of Religion often to their Minds; and then endeavouring to make this form more and more subservient to promote the Reality and Power of it'.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in his admonition of the clergy in his charge, Butler demonstrates his realistic assessment of the process by which individuals come to virtuous action.

A potential inconsistency arises in Butler's discussion of government in a sermon he gave on the anniversary of the accession of George II.¹⁰⁹ He argues that 'Civil Government has been instituted over the World, both by the Light of Nature and by Revelation, to instruct Men in the Duties of Fidelity, Justice and Regard to common Good, and enforce the Practice of these Virtues, without which there could be no Peace or Quiet amongst Mankind'.¹¹⁰ This might suggest an earlier republican or Hobbesian answer to the question of the particular goods, as it suggests that the state and its

¹⁰⁴ Butler 1751, p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Butler 1751, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Butler 1751, p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Butler 1751, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Butler 1751, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁹ George II was Butler's most prominent patron. See Joseph Butler to George II (5 August 1750), BL Add. MS 32,722, ff. 58-9.

¹¹⁰ Butler 1749, p. 434.

institutions are able to force some kind of conformity with the common good. But I think Butler is continuing with the idea that, when we are mistaken about our interests, we are unable to serve the common good. Indeed, in this passage he does not in any way argue that it is our interests that the government is designed to manipulate or direct, in the way envisaged by a philosopher such as Harrington, or indeed Mandeville.

It might also reasonably be argued that Butler wants to clarify his position towards the supremacy of *de facto* political power. With all the emphasis he places on particular interests and private conscience, it is conceivable that he wants to stress the positive role the state had to play in promoting the common good and pointing people towards their interests. This would also very much reflect Butler's quietist politics during his career in the House of Lords. Even when his friend and mentor, Thomas Secker, voted against the government on principle, Butler remained staunchly supportive of the government of the time.¹¹¹ It might be argued that this was a man putting into practice his philosophy that it is truly in one's interest to serve the common good.

In a sermon preached to the House of Lords on the anniversary of the regicide of Charles I, Butler criticises those who use their liberty as a 'cloke of maliciousness' rather than in order to serve God.¹¹² Deploying the method of *The Analogy* to practical effect, he is referring to those who are 'endeavouring to impose upon Others, by indulging wayward Passions, or carrying on indirect Designs, under Pretences of it', and 'excusing and palliating such Things to Ourselves'.¹¹³ He further argues that the true meaning of 'liberty', as it is biblically conceived, 'signifies being delivered from the Bondage of ceremonial Law'.¹¹⁴ Since the bondage attending the cult of sacrifice at the Temple of

¹¹¹ Cunliffe 1992, p. 46.

¹¹² Butler 1749, p. 373. In referring to the 'cloke of maliciousness', Butler is citing 1 Pet. 2.16.

¹¹³ Butler 1749, pp. 374-6.

¹¹⁴ Butler 1749, pp. 376-7.

Jerusalem presupposes an inability to judge for ourselves, an emancipation from it presupposes an ability to serve God voluntarily and with ‘perfect love’ rather than fear.¹¹⁵

In contrast to this conception of liberty, Butler argues, political actors have posed as defenders of *political* liberty in order to cover their passions. ‘Whether from Men’s deluding themselves, or from their intending to delude the World’, he argues, ‘it is evident scarce any thing Wrong in publick has ever been accomplished, or even attempted, but under false Colours’.¹¹⁶ Here Butler is clearly pointing to a particular diagnosis of the political madness of the regicide. In turn, the Restoration is presented as resulting from the unmasking of such hypocrisy. It was the ‘just Indignation of the Publick at what it had seen, and Fear of feeling again what it had felt, from the Popular Side’.¹¹⁷ It is to be admitted that, from this perspective, Butler comes across as politically conservative.

Butler’s argument might be said to bring us full circle. We began with the question of which group or individual had most right to govern England in the 1640s, a debate that was only settled by violence (the regicide which Butler is commemorating). Then, through the failure of one regime after another, the attempt to accommodate various particular interests within a constitutional structure while maintaining liberty confirmed for Butler ‘that Liberty, in the nature of it, absolutely requires, and even supposes, that People are able to govern Themselves, in those Respects in which they are free’.¹¹⁸ In other words, where human interests are concerned, individuals have to be able to see how their private interests conform to the common good, and the rest is merely a politics of repression, manipulation and hypocrisy.

¹¹⁵ Butler 1749, pp. 376-7.

¹¹⁶ Butler 1749, p. 383.

¹¹⁷ Butler 1749, p. 388.

¹¹⁸ Butler 1749, pp. 395-6.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion I want to make some comments about the normative implications of my historical argument. It is perilous for an historian of ideas to claim that their work has much to offer in the way of advice to contemporaries. All I have done in this thesis is to offer a number of different ways in which to conceive of the relationship between particular interests and the common good (sometimes conceived as the ‘public interest’) in the period under discussion. However, there is one conception of the relationship between particular interests and the common good that has, I believe, been too long neglected. This neglect is largely due to its absence from J. A. W. Gunn’s history, and subsequent historians’ reliance upon Gunn’s work. The conception in question is that according to which private and particular interests might be made to conform to the common good (sometimes described as the ‘public interest’) through a process of institutional or constitutional manipulation.

I have shown how this argument came to be made, first (fitfully) by Parliamentarians in the Civil War, and then more forcefully by republican and commonwealth writers from Harrington onwards.¹ I have also shown how this core assertion that interests could somehow be harnessed or manipulated into a form that would serve the common good, was shared by Mandeville, and that this fact might surprise those who assume Mandeville to argue for Adam Smith’s invisible hand.² All these writers share the basic premise, that the individual interests of human beings are factors that are significant, but at the same time are not to be trusted always to conform to the common good.³

¹ See chapters 1, 3 and 5 above.

² See chapter 6 below.

³ In his recent book on contemporary republicanism, Philip Pettit has reinforced this sentiment, pointing out that under the liberal model of Hobbes and Locke, it is simply assumed that politicians are able to lay aside their private interests and act in an entirely disinterested manner (as we have seen, Hobbes made no such assumption, but we can see what he means), when they patently cannot be trusted to act in this way. ‘If this response seems somewhat cynical’ Pettit adds, ‘it is fully in line with the long tradition of republican

It must be admitted that this notion does not fit particularly well with modern individualism as Gunn presents it, for it relies on the idea of the people as a corporate body. Unfortunately, modern political thought seems to have abandoned this image, replacing it with the simplistic notion that democratic politics works by politicians appealing to the largest possible aggregate of individual interests. Moreover, as John Dunn argues, the modern conception of democracy increasingly resists the potentially aristocratic elements that are contained in such a conception of the common good.⁴

The resistance to this more corporatist notion of the relationship between private interests and the common good is born of the victory of two assumptions in the course of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of these – argued for by Joseph Butler – was that particular interests will cohere with the common good provided that we think about them in the right way. The other was the related belief that, if particular interests (when correctly thought about) are identical with the common good, then the true *public* interest must be a mere aggregation of individual interests. This was the basis of the utilitarian conception of the public interest, which came to be seen as the merest common sense in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain.

The utilitarian ideology of philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham signalled the victory of the conception which Gunn portrays as our current one: that the public interest is constituted by a mere aggregation of private interests. In the opening of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham makes this very argument:

The interest of the community is one of the most general expressions that can occur in the phraseology of morals: no wonder that the meaning of it is often lost. When it has a meaning it is this. The community is a fictitious *body*, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting it as it were its *members*.

thought’, which conceives of human nature as ‘universally corruptible if often ... actually uncorrupt’ (Pettit 2012, p. 247).

⁴See introduction above; Dunn 2000, pp. 105-6.

The interest of the community then is, what? the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it.⁵

Here we find the strongest possible claim that the public good of the community can be quantified by simply adding together all the particular interests of its members.

Michael Sandel, in his Tanner Lecture of 1998, rightly notes that this conception is still generally endorsed. He comments on ‘the widely accepted practice of conducting democratic politics as if it were about aggregating and responding to interests’.⁶ Speaking of the commodification of voting, he argues that there is a ‘mistaken view that the purpose of democracy is to aggregate people’s interests and preferences and translate them into policy’, and by extension argues that ‘if this theory of democracy is right, then there is no good reason to prohibit the buying and selling of votes’.⁷ As we have seen, this notion that modern democratic (and liberal) politics is defined by a process of compounding and aggregating interests is one that has been supported by all recent historians who have written about interests. In Gunn’s case it is presented as the only alternative to the conception of the public interest as an overriding reason of state, used to oppress subjects in outmoded monarchical systems. I hope that this thesis may succeed in making us reconsider whether this is the only way in which to conceive of the relationship between the particular interests of individuals and the common good of the community in which (for better or worse) they lead their lives.

⁵ Bentham 1789, pp. ii-iii. I here suspend judgment as to whether Bentham agreed with Butler’s identification of private interests with the common good (see Schofield 2006, pp. 272-5). Indeed, a whole other thesis could be written on Bentham’s particular conception of interests.

⁶ Sandel 2000, p. 115.

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